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Second Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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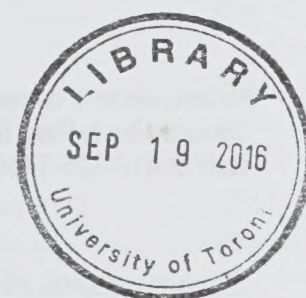
Deuxième session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 15 September 2016

Jeudi 15 septembre 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 September 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 septembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 14, 2016, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. Member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I was just getting warmed up yesterday afternoon when, unfortunately, the clock struck 6 and it was time to go down and check out some of the receptions here at Queen's Park and find out who was joining us in the Legislature.

We were talking about the throne speech and the fact that the price of electricity has gone through the roof, to a point where it's completely unaffordable for many people, particularly in rural Ontario. For the five years that I've been here, Madam Speaker—good morning to you; I hope your drive in from Scarborough was excellent this morning—we've been telling this government that the power generation contracts that they've signed, 20-year contracts—they started signing these back in 2009, under the Green Energy Act—were too rich for the consumer. We were told, though, by the government that that wasn't the case, that that wasn't the cost. We were told that the rates weren't going up because of generation costs; we were told it was because of improvements to the grid. But we now know that's not the case, either.

A couple of days ago the C.D. Howe Institute wrote the minister to explain to him that the increase in Ontario's electricity prices is almost entirely due to generation costs, as we've been saying all along. Yesterday, Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro wrote the Premier an open letter demonstrating that on the average bill, with an 800-kilowatt hour-monthly usage, there's been an 8% increase in distribution costs since 2006 but there's been a 113% increase in generation costs since 2006. In fact, the generation costs in 2016 are now slightly more than the entire bill was in 2006.

So now that the guys who actually send the bills have told us that it's not the grid that's costing us, it's the

generation that's sending bills through the roof, I'd like to use the 168th time now that I've stood in this Legislature to talk about energy rates since being elected in 2011, that the government stop peddling that line. It's a line that is built in fantasy. It should have a Tin Man and a Scarecrow attached to it; it's that much of a fantasy.

Forgetting for a second that every single party in the Legislature—there are three of us—voted to end the use of coal; a long time ago we voted to end the use of coal. As a matter of fact, it was 13 years ago; it was back in 2003. Forgetting that this government pushed back the scrap-out of coal in the last 13 years a couple of different times, and forgetting about the fact that the first coal plant was actually closed by a member of the PC government, Elizabeth Witmer—this is another line that bears no relation to reality. The government keeps perpetrating or insinuating or telling the people of Ontario that they're the only ones that wanted to phase out coal, and that's simply another fantasy.

Madam Speaker, we hit the power peak back in 2007, and we haven't come close to hitting that peak since that year. At any time on a given day, we're capable of generating between 8,000 and 10,000 more megawatts than we're going to use. We consistently use about 3,000 to 4,000 fewer megawatts of power than we have ever used, and that's largely due to the fact that a lot of the manufacturers have left Ontario and gone to other low-cost-power jurisdictions. And it's also because of the recession.

It's the Premier's predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, who always bragged that this government was also putting 16 natural gas stations on line. It's those natural gas stations that have really replaced coal as the main supplier of electricity. The natural gas lines have replaced coal. It's certainly not the wind and solar installations that are out there, which energy experts are telling us are causing chaos on the grid. The C.D. Howe Institute just told us, a couple of days ago, that it's these types of generators that are putting the cost of electricity through the roof in Ontario, and this government doesn't seem to want to realize that fact.

All of these expensive contracts that we're paying out to Samsung and NextEra and all of these other wind and solar companies aren't replacing coal. They just simply cannot do that. They don't have the capacity to do that. It's the natural gas; it's the increase in our nuclear power. They are, however—these NextEra and Samsung and other renewable projects we've locked in for 20 years at exorbitant subsidies—providing low-cost power to New York and Pennsylvania on a regular basis, because after we pay the premium for those types of electricity that we

can't use, we then sell them for pennies on the dollar to these neighbouring jurisdictions, something that the Premier earlier this week referred to as a profit. I think we've had a pretty good debate on what actually is profit and what's not profit. Clearly that's not.

The former minister told us electricity prices were competitive as long as we didn't include the global adjustment. Well, the global adjustment is the biggest part of the bill for many, many residents, manufacturers and small business people in Ontario right now. It's not the actual kilowatt hour usage. It's the global adjustment that's attached to that, and if you sat down at any meeting with those in the manufacturing sector, where they actually have the line item "global adjustment" on their bill, it's evident that it's killing business in Ontario. It simply is.

It's not just me that says this. I have a story that was in, I believe, the Belleville Intelligencer from the AMO conference, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, earlier this summer, down in Windsor. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus was talking about the global adjustment and what it means for businesses in eastern Ontario—and it's not just eastern Ontario but all regions of the province. It's the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus chair, Peter Emon, who is the warden of Renfrew county, who said:

"In the case of energy costs they are increasing at an unprecedented pace with no end in sight and the reality is that rural customers are shouldering a disproportionate burden compared to their urban counterparts. High energy costs force families to choose between electricity bills and other basic necessities and services, posing a growing threat of 'energy poverty' across our region and the province....

"Large businesses, particularly in the industrial manufacturing sector of eastern Ontario, are feeling the impact of GA charges....

0910

"This is because GA fees must make up the difference between energy consumption and conservation. In short, when Ontario consumers use less electricity, GA costs increase to cover the minimum revenues that energy producers are guaranteed."

So it's these long-term contracts that the government has failed to realize are driving up the cost of electricity for our manufacturers, for our small business people and regular people at home in Ontario.

What did they do in the throne speech Monday afternoon? They announced that they were putting a Band-Aid on this situation, to try and get them through to the next election, by taking the 8% portion of the HST off bills. But clearly they haven't dealt with the root problem, and that is these contracts. What's worse is that they made no mention in the throne speech, Madam Speaker, of stopping that practice. They're continuing to put these types of projects on the grid. They don't realize that by what they're doing they are responsible for the exorbitant cost of electricity in Ontario.

The current minister, after almost a decade in Ottawa trying to raise the issue of rural and specifically northern

energy costs, came to Queen's Park, became a cabinet minister and suddenly rural energy prices weren't a crisis for him. He is the member for Sudbury and our new Minister of Energy. At least, that's what he said about a month ago. He said that it wasn't a crisis in rural Ontario. Apparently, becoming a minister for this Premier alters your reality pretty quickly.

So we had events in this order: We had a Liberal by-election loss in a part of the province that they hadn't lost in 30 years—and good morning to Mr. Raymond Cho, who is here this morning. Good to see you, sir, and congratulations on your victory. We had, right after that—a week after that—a Thursday prorogation that, according to the Canadian press, even surprised some members of the Liberal cabinet. We had a Premier's office trying all weekend to convince us that they had heard the message and they knew hydro rates were a real problem.

It was fun to spend last weekend trying to figure out what they would do, and at the end of the day they really didn't do much. They took the 8% off of electricity bills. It was 8% that this Premier and 20 of her cabinet ministers voted against removing from hydro bills when they had the opportunity five years ago, in November 2011. We were here and we had a bill that was presented by a member of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Mantha. The NDP supported that bill to remove the HST from hydro bills and the PCs supported that bill to remove the HST from hydro bills, but what did Premier Wynne—well, she wasn't Premier at the time, but what did Kathleen Wynne and 20 of her current cabinet ministers do at that time? They voted against that proposition. Five years ago they had the opportunity to provide some relief and they chose not to do that.

You know, it was an 8% that the Minister of Economic Development at the time and the Attorney General denigrated as bad policy when the opposition attempted to bring it in five years ago. Now we have members of the government standing and taking pride in the fact that they've listened to the people of Ontario and that they've heard their concerns? I have been up 168 times, myself, talking about the rising cost of electricity in this Legislature, and I know that all of the others around me have been up a lot more than that.

Madam Speaker, 60,000 thousand families—60,000 families—have had their service cut off; hundreds in my region. A 74-year-old woman in McArthur's Mills that I was talking about yesterday had her power cut off. She has to drive into Bancroft to get her water. She has to bathe at her neighbour's house. This is Ontario. This is Ontario, Madam Speaker, and this government has made a mess of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Liz Sandals: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I have a message from the Honourable

Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2017 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE
(CONTINUED)

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE
(SUITE)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a privilege for me to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to offer some thoughts on the remarks from the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

As I listened to the last part of his speech, I heard him talk about the AMO—the Association of Municipalities of Ontario—conference, which many MPPs attended over the summer. I have to say, in my conversation with some of the councillors from the city of London who attended AMO, one of them in particular remarked on the fact that this AMO conference was unique in terms of the number of times that rising electricity costs were identified as a concern for municipalities across the province. She commented that everybody that she spoke to at AMO was unanimous in the fact that if we don't get our energy costs under control, this province and municipalities are in big trouble.

So I find it somewhat astonishing that with this throne speech it was like September 1 was the first time that the Liberals ever recognized rising electricity rates as a problem. It is a problem across this province. It has been a problem, not just in the last year, but certainly in the three years since I was elected. Pretty much on a daily basis, from the moment I first assumed office, September 1, 2013, I have received emails from constituent after constituent who is suffering under the burden of these high electricity costs.

This throne speech offers an 8% rebate, about 36 cents a day of relief. That will do nothing to address the real issues in the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy system in this province. The throne speech was too little, too late.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm pleased to rise today to discuss this subject. I'm finding it really interesting right now that the opposition is insinuating that proroguing was a shock or a surprise. I think that we all know that it's a fairly standard procedure in the middle of a majority mandate. In fact, it was a member from the opposition that suggested to me very early in the spring that this was a possibility. So I'm not really thinking that there's any big surprise here. We have had a very

ambitious mandate, and I think that it really doesn't come as a large shock to anybody here.

I would like to focus on some of the great and positive initiatives within the throne speech; for example, 100,000 licensed child care spaces. This is something that I know is going to be very important for me. As a matter of fact, it's going to directly benefit my family. I have a grandchild: King George, we call him. He was born just before Prince-George-to-be. I'm very pleased that there are many items within the throne speech that are going to be of significant assistance to many, many families. The licensed child care spaces are really one of them that we should be celebrating together, in fact.

The rural and remote energy customers are also going to receive significant savings. That's something that the opposition was interested in seeing. We're pleased to see that it's there. They'll have a monthly savings of about 20%, or \$45 a month, \$540 a year.

I think there's lots to celebrate here, and I look forward to hearing the discussion to come.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

0920

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je vais parler un petit peu du discours du trône de cette semaine. Vraiment, on a une chose que je n'ai jamais entendue discutée ici cette semaine à la législature : c'est la discussion d'une université seulement francophone. Je pense que—

Applause.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Merci, madame. Je pense que c'est difficile pour toutes les assemblées francophones dans la province de l'Ontario, les Ontariens et les Ontariennes qui attendent cette annonce bientôt. Ils ont pensé que peut-être leur rêve serait mentionné un peu dans le discours du trône de cette semaine, mais tant pis. On n'a rien entendu cette semaine de cette discussion.

On a parlé au sujet des garderies d'enfants la discussion, c'est d'avoir des places pour des Ontariens et Ontariennes, mais seulement en 2017. On a besoin de places, peut-être, plus tôt que ça. Pourquoi après la prochaine élection? Ce n'est pas juste.

Maintenant on a une crise d'électricité, mais on a entendu du gouvernement que c'est une crise seulement après la « by-election » que M. Raymond Cho a remportée la semaine passée à Scarborough–Rouge River. On l'appelle maintenant « Scarborough–Bleue Rivière ». Maintenant c'est une crise parce qu'ils ont perdu une circonscription qui était très libérale avant ce mois. Alors, on a une crise d'électricité. C'est une vraie crise pour beaucoup de familles en Ontario. J'aimerais entendre ce qu'on peut faire pour toutes ces familles.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, or Mrs. Speaker, Madam Speaker—somebody speaking.

I want to talk about, again—this is my fourth time on a two-minute hit—the crisis in hydro and how disappointing it is to the residents of Ontario that the

minister last week said he didn't realize it was a crisis. It's absolutely astonishing to me.

When you take a look at what it's doing to seniors, families, single moms, single dads—they are coming into my office. I put a post up last week, and you'll be interested in this, because it was very interesting; I was surprised at it. I put a post up about hydro and hydro rates. Within 24 hours 100,000 people had viewed the post; 2,000 people had signed a petition. We're talking 24 hours. We had over 1,300 shares. It is the number one issue in the province of Ontario: affordability.

I said yesterday—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —and it's unfortunate that all the Liberals are talking right now. It's unfortunate that families couldn't buy their kids school supplies when they went back. They came into my office, and these are people who pay their bills on time and they're saying they can't do it any longer. They break down and cry. I don't know about other MPPs in this office; it's got to be happening in your office too, whether you're a Liberal or a Conservative, and it's got to get you right in the middle of your stomach when people are coming into your office and breaking down right in front of you.

We have to fix the crisis in hydro, and I don't believe that happened the other day.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the members from London West, Kingston and the Islands, Thornhill and Niagara Falls.

I certainly agree with the member from Niagara Falls, because for the five years that I've been here—and I know he's been in this Legislature for a couple of years now himself—that's the number one issue at my office. People are coming in; they're breaking down in tears because they're losing their homes. They can't afford to put their kids in after-school programs because they can't pay their hydro bill. They cannot pay their electricity bill. It's by far the number one issue that I've spoken on in this Legislature, and it's the number one issue that many members of the opposition parties have spoken on over the last number of years.

We've seen this storm coming. I think it's just starting to really hit the urban areas now. When you see a riding like Scarborough go down for the Liberals in part because of electricity, I think it should send a message.

This is a province, Madam Speaker, that used to be the industrial heartland. It used to be the place where we made tractors at Caterpillar. We used to make ketchup at Heinz. We used to make sausages and hot dogs at Schneiders. But for the first time in 100 years, this might be the province where Oshawa doesn't make cars any longer, and it all has to do with the energy policies of this Liberal government.

Talk to any manufacturer, and the biggest problem that they're having isn't the red tape. That's a big problem. Red tape is a big problem; there's no question. It's not hiring skilled workers. That is a problem, but it's

not the biggest problem. The overwhelming problem is the soaring cost of electricity.

But that's Liberal Ontario, Madam Speaker. It's a province you can't afford because the job is no longer available because of a policy that this government brought in that made it cheaper for them to have the jobs elsewhere. But hey, they're willing to take 8% off your hydro bill because they've been listening. Madam Speaker, we know they haven't been listening for a long, long time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure for me to add a few words to this debate.

Like everybody else, I was quite surprised, actually, when I heard they were proroguing. It did come as a surprise to me. I'm not in the inner workings of the Liberal Party, I realize, but it came as a surprise. I expected to listen attentively to the throne speech, which I did, and it started out rather positively. It says, "Your government remains committed to building Ontario up in a way that helps you in your everyday lives." I thought, "Wow, this is going to be pretty good," and then it was not.

I will focus on some of the comments in the throne speech that they made about health care. They go on to say that the vast majority of Ontarians have a family doctor or a nurse practitioner. This statement is true—the vast majority—but we are there not for the vast majority; our health care system is there for every single Ontarian who needs it. That means that hundreds of thousands of people still don't have a primary care provider. That includes 170,000 of them in the city of Toronto. In the area where I live, 20,000 people still don't have a primary care provider. They can call Health Care Connect all they want. The only thing we get out of Health Care Connect is a monthly letter letting you know to continue searching on your own. Really, Speaker?

When a throne speech is delivered, it should be delivered so that it includes everyone. It includes those people who want to have a primary care provider: 20,000 of them in and around Sudbury, in my riding, who still don't; 14,000 in Thunder Bay; and 12,000 in Windsor. Those people are part of Ontario. They should have been included.

Then they talk about the fact that only 44% of Ontarians—that's according to Health Quality Ontario—are able to access same-day or next-day appointments with their primary care providers. What happened to the rest of us? What happened to the 66% who don't? Under this government, Ontario's performance is trailing behind the rest of the developed world that has put in place mechanisms so that people have access when they need it. The problem is worse where I come from, in the north. I would say it's even worse in the northwest, where three out of four people cannot see their primary care providers within a 24-hour period, and same-day or next-day appointments remain out of reach for so many people.

We know that this is an issue because if you have a sick child or if you're not feeling good, you phone your

primary care provider—your physician or your nurse practitioner—and they tell you that the next appointment is in three weeks. You're not going to wait three weeks with a baby that has a fever. You're not going to wait three weeks with a headache and vomiting and diarrhea and all the rest of it. You need to be seen pretty soon, or drastic things—so they end up in emerg.

0930

The Liberals rarely talk about hospitals. In the throne speech, they talked about the projects they will be building, and I'm all for it. Building new hospitals, I think we can all agree, is a good thing. But there's the announcement and then there's the actual action. This government has a record of cancelling hospital projects, like the five projects they cancelled in 2012. Communities have planned for them, they have fundraised for their new hospitals, and now, with a stroke of a pen, the projects are gone.

At the same time, we all know that hospital maintenance is not keeping up. My party, the New Democrats, filed a freedom of access to information last spring. The freedom of access to information showed us that there's a \$3.2-billion repair backlog in Ontario hospitals. The annual infrastructure renewal fund for our hospitals is \$175 million a year. So \$175 million a year looks pretty good, but once you start to do the math—a \$3.2-billion backlog—a \$175-million investment is not going to work. It is actually half of what the Auditor General says is needed each and every year just to keep up, just so that we don't add to that \$3.2-billion backlog that we have.

What does that mean? That means that hospitals cannot do the repairs that they need because the Liberals won't fund them. In fact, we have asked the government to come clean and tell us about the backlog in each and every hospital. What we got is: Is it urgent or not, the description, the total amount. But the names of the hospitals in our freedom of access to information were all blocked out. When we asked to see which hospitals had—some of them have multi-million-dollar backlogs of repairs to be done. The minister says that information cannot be made available because it would jeopardize the contractors' bidding process, which is rather odd because a similar request for information was made to the Ministry of Education, and through the Ministry of Education we got the same type of chart as to how much repairs need to be done to our schools, and we got it school by school, so that we have transparency, we have accountability, and we see which of our schools need upgrades.

Do you really think that different contractors will bid on hospitals than on a school that needs a new boiler or a new roof or a parking lot repaving? Those are the same people who do that work. The argument that if we know which hospital has those repair backlogs it will change the bidding process doesn't hold water, because there has been transparency at the municipal level forever, there has been transparency through the Ministry of Education in the same government, and things have worked just fine. Why is it that when it comes to our hospitals, they

say transparency always leads to better care—they say this over and over, and we agree—but when it's time to give transparency and accountability, then there are all sorts of reasons why this should not happen? We want a Ministry of Health that is transparent and open because we know that transparency and accountability always lead to better care.

Then, there was this entire part about adding more nurses. Well, if you talk to nurses on the front line—I'm sure many of you have had the opportunity to have nurses come to you or talk to you—they will talk about the number of positions within our hospitals that are being eliminated. There is a big cohort of nurses who are ready to retire and who are not being replaced. Many of the new ones coming in end up working two or three part-time jobs. They'll talk about nurses who still have full-time work but who are worried for their licence because their caseload is just so heavy that they know that they are not able to provide good-quality care. Yet, if they don't do it, there are no other nurses around them to pick up the slack; they're gone. This is what happens when a government decides to freeze hospital budgets for four years in a row.

This year, the ministry decided to fund our hospitals, but it failed to make hospital funding keep up with inflation, population growth, and the special needs of hospitals in the north. Hospitals did get a little bit of money, but not enough to keep up with inflation, not enough to keep up with population growth and not enough to keep up with the special challenges of our northern hospitals.

In the throne speech, they also talk about more seniors having access to prescription drugs. I couldn't help but chuckle a little bit when they read that one because the facts are that, just months ago, this government wanted to nearly double the cost of prescription drugs for most seniors. The 2016 budget, you will remember, was going to increase the deductible by 70% and increase the copay for every time a prescription is filled. There was a revolt by seniors when they became aware of this, and the Liberal government had to take a step back. I am happy that they listened to what seniors had to say, but I wish they didn't have to put seniors through that turmoil and that stressful period and had taken the time to talk to seniors before they rolled out policies like this.

We all know that a lot of Ontarians cannot afford their medications and we all know that our health care system pays a heavy price because, when people can't afford their medication, they don't take it on a regular basis. They don't take it as it should be taken. They end up in trouble. They end up with health challenges. They end up right back in our health care system. Action is needed, and this action is called pharmacare, just in case you didn't know.

First Nations health care continues to suffer. Investments are being made, but we are starting from so far back. We need a lot of real action, real steps, in partnership with First Nations, to make sure that every First Nation has the same opportunity that every other On-

tarian has, no matter where you live. If they choose to live in beautiful northern Ontario, where I'm from, they should have the same opportunities as everybody else. There should not be states of emergency in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and across the First Nations community before we realize that things need to change, that action needs to be taken. It should never have gotten to that point. It speaks to the failures of both the provincial and the federal governments to make sure that every person in Ontario has the health care that they need.

I see that my time is running away faster than I wanted. I'll make two more points on health and then change topics.

The first one is that in the throne speech it says that PSWs are getting the wage enhancement that they were promised. In response to that claim by the government in the throne speech, the Ontario Personal Support Worker Association said that the government was "incorrect and misleading." As reported in the *Toronto Star* this summer, the dream of PSWs that all of them would see a wage enhancement has "turned into a nightmare as government health care agencies force PSWs, who are paid by the hour and are not on a fixed salary, to spend less time with clients and have also reduced the number of clients they see."

This means that at the end of the day, their take-home pay is even lower than before. How could that be? To have an idea is one thing, but to mess up in the implementation the way that they have done is just unbelievable.

0940

The last part I wanted to talk about was on page 8. We all understand that a throne speech gives out broad policy. We're not going to see the details in a throne speech—I fully get this—but listen to this, and I'm quoting from the throne speech on page 8 for everybody to see: "It believes that additional resources for health care should be directed where they will help patients most: at the front line—not only to the highest-billing physicians...." Really, Speaker? We have a Ministry of Health that is at war with our physicians, and they take the throne speech as an opportunity to poke them in the eye? This did not add anything to the throne speech. It did not set out broad policy. It poked physicians in the eye at a time when negotiations are as bad as they can get. Nothing good comes of that—nothing. A good, functioning health care system has a good relationship with its physicians. When you talk about medicare, physician services are accessible to us and hospital services are accessible to us, and once you start a war with your physicians, nothing good comes of this. And then you take the throne speech, which sets broad policies and broad goals, and you say, "But I will also take this opportunity to poke you in the eye." What do you figure will come of this, Madam Speaker?

Every time we paint our physicians the way that this ministry has been painting them, we hurt the relationship that is at the core of good-quality care. In order to have good-quality care, people have to trust their physicians

because physicians ask you to do things that are often very difficult, that often go against everything you want to do, and they have to be able to convince you that this is good for your health. But when you have a Minister of Health and a Ministry of Health that paint them all like a bunch of money-hungry good-for-nothings, you do a lot of damage.

This was not necessary. It was put in there for—I don't know why. To make things worse? I want our health care system to be there for every one of us. I want our physicians to be happy to be working in Ontario. I don't want this kind of thing. This adds nothing. It just makes things worse.

Je vois qu'il ne me reste pas beaucoup de temps. Je voudrais utiliser le temps qui me reste pour un autre gros oubli dans le discours du trône. Ça, c'est les francophones. La minute que l'on a su qu'il y avait une prorogation de l'Assemblée législative, tous les médias sociaux se sont allumés en même temps pour dire, « Qu'est-ce qui va arriver à l'université franco? » Peu importe si tu regardais Instagram, Twitter, Facebook—n'importe quoi—ou les nouvelles francophones et les médias francophones, qu'on parle de Radio-Canada ou de TFO, tout le monde du côté francophone ne parlait que d'une chose : « Qu'est-ce qui va arriver à l'université franco? »

Là, je vais vous lire ça dans le discours du trône, parce que ça vaut la peine d'être lu. On arrive à la page 5. Le discours du trône ne faisait que commencer, et on dit : "Every person in Ontario deserves an excellent education, from kindergarten through to post-secondary," and then the entire francophone community holds their breath because we expected "including the francophone population," but we're not there. We are not in the throne speech anywhere. Francophones are not mentioned, and the Franco-Ontarian university is not mentioned either.

On peut parler d'opportunités manquées tant qu'on veut, mais quand on regarde le restant du discours du trône, c'est évident que ce n'est pas une opportunité manquée. Ça a été fait de façon volontaire. On nous a omis du discours du trône parce qu'on nous envoie un message clair que ça ne dérange pas que pour tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, la priorité numéro un c'est d'avoir notre université franco; pour les libéraux, ce n'est pas une priorité.

Au mois de juin, on a reçu une lettre du ministre responsable qui nous disait qu'il était pour mettre en place un comité de travail pour l'université franco—bon, il y avait un petit peu d'espoir; on va regarder à ça—et qu'il devait rapporter les résultats cet automne. Mais on est rendu à la mi-septembre. Le comité n'a aucune personne qui siège, n'a pas de mandat, n'a pas de président et ne s'est pas réuni une seule fois. Mais ils sont supposés de rapporter dans quelque temps. On rit de nous autres, madame la Présidente; on fait rire de nous autres.

On a un gouvernement qui refuse d'écouter les francophones, peu importe les arguments valables que l'on met de l'avant. Tout ce qu'on se fait servir, fois

après fois, c'est « On va étudier ça encore. On a besoin d'y regarder encore. » Tout ce qu'on demande, c'est un pas concret. Le pas concret est simple : mettez en place un comité de gouverneurs de transition et laissez-les faire leur travail. C'est tout. C'est tout ce qu'on demande : un comité de gouvernance de transition pour la mettre en place. Ils pourront négocier des ententes avec les collègues et avec les autres universités. Ils pourront voir où les besoins sont, quels programmes on utilise en premier et quels programmes seront conjoints. Mais non. On nous oublie complètement du discours du trône. Même chose avec notre bon commissaire aux services en français : pas un mot par rapport à la revue de la Loi 8.

Je manque de temps. Merci, madame la Présidente.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Merci. Questions and comments?

L'hon. Eleanor McMahon: Il me fait un grand plaisir ce matin de répondre aux commentaires du membre de Nickel Belt au sujet du discours du trône. Sûrement, c'est une avocate très émouvante pour la communauté francophone, et je partage son espoir et ses sentiments là-dessus.

The member opposite is a fierce advocate for her community, and I thank you for her comments about the francophone community in Ontario, which is a preoccupation that we share on this side of the House, Madam Speaker.

I just wanted, by way of response to some of her comments, to contextualize a little bit. Of course, this place is sometimes what we hold in common, but in these moments it's sometimes how we approach things differently.

So, just by way of contextualizing, the member opposite talks about health care and what was in the speech from the throne, but I think it's important to remind those watching and members of the House that our government has invested a billion dollars—that's a B, Madam Speaker—in health care in this province. Our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, himself a physician and an incredibly caring practitioner, has led that conversation and those investments, and it's an honour to serve with him.

Three hundred and forty-five million dollars is another important figure. Why, Speaker? Because it talks about our investment in hospitals. As the member for Burlington, I can speak eloquently to that because we're getting a brand new hospital in our community as a consequence of investments by this government. I can tell you, when it comes to attracting jobs and investment to Burlington, I can say, with great authority, that that's helped us enormously.

While the member opposite talks about that, a final comment, Speaker: I think it's important to remember, then, when it comes to this side of the House and this Liberal government, the NDP needs to think back to a period in the 1990s when their government made substantial health care cuts. In that context, it's important to remember that you can talk about it, but we're doing things that are important—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments. I recognize the member from—Oshawa? No.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Whitby—Oshawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Whitby—Oshawa, thank you.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning. It's my pleasure to rise and enter the debate today.

What's clear out of this debate is that Ontarians have had enough. They've made that clear in Scarborough—Rouge River recently, they've made that clear in Whitby—Oshawa and they've made that clear in Simcoe North. It's about high electricity rates. It's about health care cuts. It's about job losses, about the lack of a plan to stimulate the economy.

What we saw earlier this week in the throne speech is too little, too late, simply a Band-Aid solution for Liberal mistakes, and at the end of the day, Ontarians' hydro bills are going to continue to get more expensive—very expensive.

What it took was yet another by-election loss to stimulate and bring forward these suggestions. What we need is a concrete plan to put Ontario back on track again.

Interjections.

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Mr. Lorne Coe: The members opposite can heckle if they wish, but they know that the single issue that they're hearing most in their constituency offices is the same as mine: high electricity rates, health care cutbacks, and job losses. What we got earlier this week was another Band-Aid solution, without any directions at all.

Going forward, we look forward, as a party, to bringing forward some concrete solutions to address some of these issues.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to add my two cents today on the speech from the throne, which, as my colleague from Nickel Belt put it, was a disappointment.

We heard that there was going to be a reset. I think there was maybe even a little bit of hope, perhaps a bit of optimism, but not much love, though, on this side anymore for what we hear from the Liberal government.

But it turns out it wasn't a reset. It was a disconnect, and that was very clear throughout the throne speech, as my colleague talked about health care and the disappointing approach by this government and its not addressing the crisis across our communities. That's immensely disappointing.

I do want to get on the record some of what my constituents said over the summer. I'm sure that the Liberals would have heard it if they were listening. My constituents came in droves to talk about their struggle, how they're going to make ends meet, and it always came back to hydro bills. The lack of appreciation from this government for what's actually happening out there

is shocking. Individuals are coming through the door with hydro bills that have more than doubled from this time last year to this summer, where they've got to reduce their fan usage.

I had a gentleman come in and he said, "Well, I've already reduced my fan usage down from two fans to one fan. I only keep the fan on where I'm sitting, if it's in front of the TV or in front of the computer." He doesn't have air conditioning. His bill has gone from \$42 last summer, same month, to over \$100, and he's terrified about the winter. But he has a plan, Madam Speaker. He always keeps his heat at 62, because he has a very heavy housecoat and good slippers.

That's what it has come to? That's what it has come to in Ontario, that people are afraid of winter? This is Canada. We're not afraid of winter, okay? But we are afraid of winter hydro bills, and shame on this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: A speech from the throne is an opportunity to reflect back on the things that have happened in your community, and I do want to talk a little bit about what has happened in Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville over the last two years.

We have had, in each of the last two years, one new GO train added to our schedule. This means that for our people, an extra 1,500 people per GO train can now leave their cars at home, or leave them in the parking lot, and ride the train downtown. That has been a major factor in helping to ease the burden on some of our overcrowded roads, because if you're going to try and get into Toronto, it's not that easy to get in, coming from the west. You've got two lanes of traffic on Lakeshore; you've got four lanes of traffic on the QEW; you've got two lanes of traffic on the Queensway; and then you've got High Park in the way, and then you've got four lanes during the morning, down to two, on Bloor Street, and that's it. That's how you get in from Mississauga, unless you go over the top and sit in the parking lot that we call the 401. So that has been a major contributor, along with enhanced bus service in northwest Mississauga.

As well, our major capital project is the redevelopment of Credit Valley Hospital's emergency room, which continues on budget and on schedule. It will be a complete remake of Credit Valley, which is going to greatly enhance the ability of the hospital to provide treatment in a revamped emergency suite, to add additional beds, and to update a hospital whose size of area served grows by about 20,000 people each year.

Speaker, one of the things that this speech from the throne and the government's actions in the past two years have done is to recognize the need to keep pace with the growth that is driving Ontario today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Nickel Belt to wrap up.

M^{me} France G  linas: I have gone through some of the pieces that were lacking, so let me tell you how it could have been. It could have been that the speech from

the throne would have told us how the 800,000 Ontarians that don't have access to primary care would gain access. It would tell us that same-day and next-day appointments would be available for all. It would tell us that we will commit to fixing our broken home care system that fails more people than it helps. It would address the long wait-lists, whether that is for surgery or for getting into a long-term-care home. It would talk to us about where the repairs are needed in our hospitals, so that we can bring a common focus to getting our hospitals up to snuff. We would also talk about how important it is for people to gain access to the medications they need, so we would talk about pharmacare and how we make that happen.

It would have talked about the need to do better for our First Nations—a clear commitment that we should never have another state-of-health emergency in any of our First Nations communities.

It should have recognized that they would change the rolling-out of their policy so that PSWs really benefit from the salary increases—not the way it has gone—and it wouldn't have poked the physicians in the eye in doing so.

But above all, it would have told us how it would protect our public health care system so it would be there for generations to come.

Du c  t   francophone, clairement, on aurait pu faire une mention que l'  ducation postsecondaire sera disponible    tous, incluant les francophones; que la Loi sur les services en fran  ais   tait pour   tre revue; et que la disponibilit   des cours dans le Centre-Sud-Ouest   tait pour   tre revue.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources—

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: And Forestry.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): —and Forestry. Thank you.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to add a few comments in today's debate. I just want to note that I'll be sharing my time with the MPP for Davenport, the MPP for Barrie, and the President of the Treasury Board.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that is choosing to build Ontario up and help people in their everyday lives. I think that, as Ontarians, one of the things that people think about is their health care system. I'm very proud of the fact that we are building a health care system that everyone can rely on.

Being a nurse for many, many years before I was elected, I understood what happens when you don't invest fully in not only the people but the buildings in health care. I'm very proud of the record that we have in this province in the last few years, and very delighted to see that we have more provisions outlined in the throne speech on ensuring that our health care system does address community needs.

Every person in our province deserves high-quality health care. Now, 94% of Ontarians have a primary health care provider, such as a family doctor or a nurse

practitioner. That wasn't the case in the 1990s, when the previous government chose to reduce medical school places, and doctors were not as available. We helped to resolve that in 2003, when we came into office, because our government made it a priority to ensure that investing in health care was going to help for all. I'm very proud of the fact that 94% of Ontarians have a primary health care provider, and I know that our government has a commitment to ensure that we will be helping any individual, any Ontarian, who wants a health care provider to actually get one.

We've also been investing in nursing. We have had over 26,000 nurses added to the province of Ontario since 2003. I remember the days when I used to nurse, and we were short-handed—again, due to cuts in nursing school places by the previous government. I ended up in a situation with my colleagues where we didn't have enough nurses to even call on if somebody was sick or unable to manage that way. I know that our government's focus on ensuring that we have added nursing school places, that we've been supporting that field, has really helped.

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I'm very proud of the fact, as a former care coordinator for a CCAC, that we're choosing to increase our investment in home and community care. We're helping families by adding an estimated 350,000 more nursing care hours and 1.3 million hours of personal support, enhancing home and community care.

Just to give you a visual, Madam Speaker, those who are at home and reliant on this kind of care look forward to ensuring that their nurse, their personal support worker or other services that we have in the home allow the patient to stay at home, receive good care and stay longer in their home with the care that they really need. That's very important to the everyday Ontarian. It matters in their everyday life that they have the care possible to be able to get through their day very well.

The last thing I wanted to mention, while I had a few moments, was our capital campaign. In my riding of Cambridge, for many, many years we were really hoping for a new hospital expansion. Due, in part, to a previous government's decisions and some difficulties that the hospital had with supervision at a time when the plans had to be relaunched—I know that our government supported the expansion for Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

In 2011, we got the word that we were going to be able to plan for a new hospital. I was one of the most delighted people on the front lawn, along with our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to put the shovel—it was actually a bulldozer—in the ground in September 2014. It makes me and my constituents very happy to see the cranes up on that project and to ensure that we are building the hospital for the future, adding more beds and adding more services. It will be a completely different-looking hospital when it's done. That has been a major community project that's been supported by many, not only in Cambridge but in my entire region.

Those are a few of the things I just wanted to mention today, Madam Speaker. I'm just very, very happy that we're choosing to help people in their everyday lives through investing in health care.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to weigh in on the throne speech and how it will have a positive impact on the lives of Davenport residents and, really, all residents across Ontario.

I'm pleased that our government remains committed to creating jobs, growing the economy and helping people in their everyday lives. The programs outlined in the throne speech are important to our province and are crucial to those who may not benefit from stable jobs or good pensions and find it difficult to deal with the cost of electricity.

Over the last few months I met with a number of constituents who are concerned about the price of electricity, and I've received a number of emails from constituents expressing the same concern. It is a concern that I have raised on this side of the House time and time again. The throne speech demonstrates that our government has listened and has taken this seriously.

Our government has announced an intention to introduce legislation that will provide relief on electricity bills to Ontario consumers. This legislation would provide a rebate equivalent to the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax. This 8% savings would go into effect on January 1, 2017, and would result in savings of about \$130 a year for a typical Ontario residential consumer. This is great news for all of us, and I'm sure my constituents in Davenport also agree.

Our government will also remove the debt retirement charge from residential electricity bills, making electricity more affordable for low-income families through the Ontario Electricity Support Program, and invest more than \$2.6 billion to help homeowners and businesses reduce energy use to save money. These measures demonstrate that our government understands the concerns of Ontarians and the pressures facing families in Ontario and the families in my riding of Davenport.

Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker; pardon me—I was also pleased to hear about a commitment to continue building a better transit system in Ontario. In fact, announced earlier this past June, a new GO station will open up in my riding of Davenport, right at the corner of Bloor and Lansdowne. Residents asked, and our government listened and responded.

Some 50 kilometres of new and dedicated rapid transit corridors are being built, including the new Eglinton Crosstown LRT, with two new stations in the riding of Davenport, one at Eglinton and Caledonia and the other at Eglinton and Dufferin. We all know how hard it is and how difficult it is to get across this city and across this province. So over the next 10 years, as new stations are built and tracks are electrified to deliver GO regional

express rail, weekly trips across the entire GO rail network will grow to nearly 6,000. This represents more than a doubling of peak service and a quadrupling of off-peak service compared to today, and will reduce those long journey times that we are experiencing today, in some cases by as much as 50%.

Madam Speaker, we have every reason to be very proud of what we have accomplished, yet there is a lot of room for rolling up our sleeves, looking forward, and working harder together.

It's the government's responsibility to ensure that families have the right supports so children can grow and learn in a healthy environment. As the mother of two young boys, André and David, I know how important it is to have the right supports in place when it comes to our children. In fact, one of the reasons, if not the main reason, I ran for office was to ensure that our children have a bright future.

There are many young families in Davenport who want access to high-quality licensed child care spaces. To meet the demands of a growing and changing province, within the next five years, starting in 2017, our government will help to create another 100,000 licensed spaces for infants, toddlers and preschoolers so that more working families can find quality, affordable care, and above all, safe care for their children.

Madam Speaker, I'm very proud of what this government has already achieved, and I'm very excited about what we will achieve. Our goal is for Ontario to be known around the world as the place to be. I believe—actually, I know—that Ontario is the place to be: the best place to live, work and raise a family, the place of exciting opportunities. I know that this is what Davenport residents want. If we're setting the right objectives, if we're making the right investments, creating the right partnerships, I am sure that we will continue to be the province that we are.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's my pleasure to stand and support Ontario's 2016 speech from the throne, A Balanced Plan to Build Ontario Up for Everyone. It outlines our plan to continue creating jobs and growth and to help people in their everyday lives. This plan is working for my constituents in Barrie and across Ontario.

We have responded in this speech to people's concerns. We have reduced electricity costs where possible, while maintaining system reliability by rebuilding and repairing our system that was left rotting by the Harris government.

We have also extended programs for rebates for electricity that were in place before. Besides these programs already in place, it's important that eligible rural and remote customers will receive additional savings, which would result in an on-bill monthly saving of about 20%—about \$45 a month or \$540 a year. This is important to everyone. We heard all around that it is very important for remote and rural customers, that they need this rebate.

Eligible larger businesses would benefit through the expansion of the industrial conservation initiative. Participating industrial customers will be able to find cost savings of up to 34%, depending on their ability to reduce peak electricity consumption. I know that in my riding it has been great.

Some of the programs we have in place: retrofitting and adding solar energy, for instance. The National Training Rink saves approximately \$17,000 a year now because they installed solar panels on the top of their building. Also, Donaleigh's pub has done retrofits to their walk-in freezers and their energy systems, and they are saving energy and reducing costs for them, making their business able to hire more people and expand.

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We are helping families find the affordable child care they need by creating an additional 100,000 licensed spaces over the next five years, starting in 2017. We will double the current capacity for the zero to four age group, creating spaces for about 40% of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. This is very important. In my job as a teacher, I see that when the young families come to school now there are going to be a lot more parents that are going to be able to go out and enter the workforce. This will help working families and give more children the quality care that they need to have the best start in life. As a teacher, I know how important this will be to young families and to their children. I'm constantly thanked for our government's all-day junior and senior kindergarten program. That has saved young families as much as \$13,000 over two years. That's a great amount of money, and the families are very thankful for it.

We are reintroducing the election finance reform legislation; I was a member of the standing committee. I look forward to further debate about that in this House.

We are continuing to make sure that our young people have the right tools for a changing workforce. We are putting new emphasis on math skills, expanding experiential learning and encouraging more young people to turn their good ideas into start-ups. The new Ontario Student Grant will help tens of thousands of low- and middle-income students by making average college and university tuition free.

We're building a health care system that everyone can rely on. My seatmate here has a constituent from the riding of Kingston and the Islands, Dan Couture, who is listening today. Hello, Dan. He just texted my colleague to say, "On the health care file I am very happy with the treatments that I'm getting in Kingston at Kingston General Hospital. I couldn't hope for better. Thank you." And thank you, Dan.

I constantly have "thank yous" in Barrie for how things are going around Barrie in the health care system. We, of course, have just added acute cardiac care to the Barrie hospital, which will mean a lot, particularly for the people who live north of Barrie. They will have a chance to get to care before it's too late. That means a lot to the people of Barrie and north of Barrie.

We are investing in front-line workers, helping seniors with the cost of prescription drugs and reducing wait times for specialists.

We are helping families by adding an estimated 350,000 hours of nursing care and 1.3 million hours of personal support, enhancing home and community care. The people in my constituency are asking for that. The older people want to stay in their homes, and with us investing in support workers, they are going to be able to do this.

We are delivering on our primary care guarantee, connecting a doctor or a nurse practitioner to everyone who wants one.

We are investing at record levels to build new hospitals, schools, roads, bridges and transit in communities across Ontario. The minister was in Barrie last week, looking at the progress of an addition to North Collegiate. It's absolutely wonderful. There already is a new ASD classroom there for special-needs students. They are loving it; it's a great space to learn. Children need good spaces to learn. We know that that's important, so we have put a lot of money into improving situations in schools.

Through the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history—about \$160 billion over 12 years—we are helping people in their everyday lives by reducing road congestion and the time spent in traffic and transit. This is very important to my constituents, many of whom go up and down the 400 every day. Some of them have to have their cars with them as they move around in the city during their workday. Also the GO train: We are very excited that we are having our lines electrified and that in a couple of years we will have all-day, every day service to Barrie. That will make life much easier for the people in my constituency. As the prices on homes unfortunately rise here in Toronto, more and more people are coming to Barrie to live and to purchase a home, and we welcome them with open arms. But this government knows that we need to provide them with ways of getting to their jobs in the city.

Also, we're building a competitive business environment driven by innovative low-carbon industries that are attracting investment from around the world. The Business Growth Initiative is helping our highly skilled workforce compete through innovation. That is the way to go in regard to business: innovation. I know that Minister Moridi is working very hard on that file.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I do.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Yes.

Ontario will continue to lead in the fight against climate change. As a teacher, that is very important to me. The littlest children in our schools know the importance of us fixing this, and we have to be a leader, not only in North America but all around the world. Proceeds from our cap-and-trade program will be transparently invested in green projects that will help households become more efficient and help businesses be more innovative.

Debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Rinaldi assumes ballot item number 41 and Mrs. Mangat assumes ballot item number 1.

Seeing that it is now 10:15, we'll recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce a constituent of mine who's here with us in the gallery today. I'd like to introduce Ben Hendry, who is the director of Professional Engineers Government of Ontario, and two of his colleagues, George Collins and Martin Haalstra. Welcome.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome to the House today my good friend, Mayor Hector Macmillan from the municipality of Trent Hills. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Good morning, Speaker. The Casa das Beiras community centre in my riding of Davenport is starting their cultural week celebrations this weekend, and it gives me great pleasure to introduce in the House today the mayor of Lamego, Francisco Manuel Lopes; his wife, Mrs. Lopes; the president of Casa das Beiras, Bernardino Nascimento; Chef Antonio Santos, who came straight from Portugal and will be cooking up a storm at Casa das Beiras; and his wife, Mrs. Santos. Bem-vindo ao Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On behalf of the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Erin Bailey in the gallery this morning. She is the mother of page captain Victoria Bailey.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce Katherine Roposa and Louie Roposa, who are the parents of the page captain for today, Sarah Roposa. They'll be in the public gallery this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With us in the members' gallery is a former member from the riding of Brantford, from the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, Mr. Phil Gillies. Welcome, Phil. Represent.

There being no further introductions, I see a member standing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): An introduction? Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I apologize, Speaker. I just realized that I see Bruce McIntosh in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A good friend of mine, a strong New Democrat: Howard Brown is over here on the other side. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That one might cost you.

Seeing no further introductions—the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I believe that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment, please. Did you have an introduction, member from Simcoe–Grey? Okay. The member from Hamilton.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, a point of order, Speaker: I believe that we have a departing member who a few of the members would like to say a few words about, so with your indulgence—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Interjections: Unanimous consent.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, no, he said I didn't have to do that, but okay. Unanimous consent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm now supposed to recognize the other point of order, before we do that.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's really the same point, Mr. Speaker, but in a more formal way: I seek unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to a representative of each of the recognized parties to speak in honour of the parliamentary career of the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, and that the member be allotted up to five minutes for his reply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is seeking unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to a representative of each recognized party to speak in honour of the parliamentary career of the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, and that the member be allotted five minutes to reply. Do we agree? Agreed.

MEMBER FOR NIAGARA WEST– GLANBROOK

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, normally we stand in tribute because a member of the Legislature has passed. Today we're making a special exception, for the subject of our conversation is still with us. I bet Mr. Stephen Harper is a little jealous today; I don't believe he got a send-off or tribute like this.

As you know, Tim Hudak and I have adjoining ridings. We represent different parts of my hometown of Stoney Creek. Tim was born and raised in the same area he lives in today. He started out in Fort Erie and now lives just half an hour away in Wellandport. Tim actually worked a couple of summers on the border at Fort Erie. Despite his experience on the immigration front line, not once have I heard him talk about building a wall and getting the Americans to pay for it.

Tim has been here so long that his riding has had three name changes and been shaped differently twice, but his constituents over the years obviously have a lot of respect for him, because they've sent him here six times.

What I like about Tim is that he's very approachable, and he tries very hard to avoid personal attacks in debates. He's respectful, courteous and sticks to the issues, which is an admirable quality in this place. Any time I've attended a cross-party event with Tim, he mentioned my attendance there, which is a courtesy I've always appreciated. He's very sociable, and we saw sides of Tim's humour come out in a very funny way each year at the annual spring fling. I've had a real soft spot for Tim because he named one of his daughters Miller. How can you argue with a guy like that?

Tim and I have been political opponents many times, but we have also been good neighbours. From time to time, he asked my advice about dealing with unions. He'd take it, and then he'd do the exact opposite, every time.

Tim was actually one of the first members of this Legislature to congratulate me after my election in 2007. He sent a poinsettia to my new office after it opened the month after my election. Steelworkers aren't used to getting poinsettias, but I really appreciated it. It was a thoughtful gesture, the sort of thing you remember in your political career.

Some of you might be surprised to hear this, but Tim is both a conservative and a conservationist. We worked together as neighbours very successfully a few years ago to protect a natural treasure in the Stoney Creek area called the Eramosa karst. Tim and I introduced a bill to prevent the feeder lands from development and to direct that they be used as a conservation area. The government members were rather alarmed to see a steelworker and a PC leader teaming up. They didn't know quite how what to make of it or how to handle it, but eventually—possibly in fear—the government heeded our call and leased the lands to the Hamilton Conservation Authority for a nominal fee. Thanks in part to Tim's advocacy, the Eramosa karst is now protected so that future generations can enjoy it.

Again, speaking of Tim as a neighbour, one of the last things he did as an MPP was a small non-partisan action to help the people of Niagara and Hamilton regions. He signed his name on a letter that I sent to the federal government last month in support of Hamilton and Haldimand steelworkers and pensioners, asking for a public inquiry into the shenanigans at US Steel Canada and calling for a comprehensive reform of Canada's bankruptcy and insolvency processes, including the CCAA. Thank you, Tim. That meant a lot to the thousands of people who I represent and who Tim represents.

At a provincial level, Mike Harris made Tim a member of cabinet at the tender age of 31. He was younger than half the staffers here. Mr. Harris must have been looking at that map upside down, because he made this young man from one of the southernmost ridings in the province of Ontario minister of the north. Go figure. Despite his geographic disadvantage, Tim was a respected cabinet minister, and he quickly earned a promotion to Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, which makes more sense to me, since he's from near Niagara Falls.

During Tim's years as PC leader, I've always questioned the advice he got just before elections. If he ever gets back into politics, I'd be happy to go over his menu there as a neighbour and give him proposals to look at. I'll probably lead you in the—no, maybe not the right way.

But now, after a long career in this building, Tim is entering the working world. He may find out some day what it's like to have a bad boss. But he doesn't have to worry just yet because he's still the boss.

1040

Tim, you haven't had a real job in 21 years, since your days at Walmart—another good union company. The world's going to be tough out there, buddy, but I'm confident you're up for the task. By the way, Tim told me that one of the first things he's going to do in his new position is to create 100,000 jobs in the real estate business. I'm sure that was part of your interview pitch.

Thanks, Tim. On behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus, I want to thank Tim Hudak for his many years of public service as a member of provincial Parliament. I wish Tim, his wife Deb and their two young daughters, Maitland and Miller, a bright future and a happy and successful journey together as Tim embarks on this new chapter of his life.

As you've heard me say in this House many times: Tim Hudak—wow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to have the privilege of paying tribute to Tim Hudak—because we're allowed to call him that today, not necessarily the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook—as he departs from the Ontario Legislature after a distinguished career of some two decades of service, not only to the people of Niagara West—Glanbrook and its previous names but also to the people of Ontario as a whole.

I do so not simply as one member to another, but as a personal friend as well. I've had the opportunity to work with him as one of the members from the Niagara region. I think you'll find out that, certainly in recent years and perhaps previous to that, the Niagara region members, no matter what political party they happen to be a member of, tend to work together for things which are good for the Niagara region. Certainly, I always had the co-operation and involvement of Tim Hudak in those issues in which I was interested, and I attempted to be helpful to him whenever I could be as well. Our staffs have worked well together as well, and that's something that perhaps the public doesn't know.

There's a feeling probably out there, when they watch question period and at other times, that those of us in the opposition and government hate one another. That is simply not the case. We have different points of view, but there's often a great affection for one another.

A thought about the member and the family: I know that Tim's mother and father, Anne Marie and Pat, were involved in public service, and Tim has followed in their footsteps to a very great extent and that's where he got his grounding. He's made reference to that on many

occasions, the fact that his parents instilled in him the virtues which have served him well in public service, and they certainly were that. Both, by the way, were involved in education and in the political scene and were very supportive of Tim over the years in all of his endeavours. Even when they might have disagreed with him from time to time, they were certainly there backing him.

He was elected, as has been mentioned, at the age of 27, which is far too young to be elected. And remember, he was elected in a riding that had been Liberal almost forever. Ray Haggerty had been there for years and years and years as the Liberal member for Niagara South and different names. Tim got elected in 1995 in the sweep that came in. He was a true disciple of the Common Sense Revolution, something I didn't agree with but certainly was quite effective and caught the fancy of the people of Ontario, as the government was elected not once but twice on that platform. Obviously, Premier Harris saw in him his youthful enthusiasm, his interest and his educational background, in particular in the field of economics, and decided to appoint him as a parliamentary assistant first and then, of course, to various cabinet positions, where he served the government exceedingly well—despite what Bill Murdoch said one day in the House about him. But Bill said that about many people over the years, so don't worry about that.

Tim could have chosen another career path but he chose public service. Public service doesn't pay the most money and it can be very onerous. You're subject to scrutiny at all times. He could have chosen another path but he chose public service, and I think the people of his riding were pleased that he did so.

He took on one of the most onerous positions there is, one of the toughest positions, as leader of the official opposition in the Ontario Legislature or anywhere else. You have to travel the province. He was on a Winnebago at one time, by the way, travelling the province back and forth, going to bun feeds here or there, speaking to 15 people at a time. But eventually, you hope that you have the opportunity to change sides, and Tim strove for that very much, did not achieve that in his lifetime but put forward an alternative for the people of Ontario that I think they appreciated very much.

He made a lot of sacrifices. His wife, Deb Hutton, would tell you that, and the girls, Miller and Maitland, would tell you that they would liked to have seen dad at home or husband at home more often, but he did the best he could to maintain that connection with family, at the same time serving the public.

One thing you knew about Tim was—and he's not dead. When you say that, it sounds as though the person is dead. One thing you knew about Tim: You always knew where he stood. He didn't pander to the issue of the day. He didn't pander to individual interest groups and so on. He had a position he set out. I disagreed with the position but I admired the fact that he enunciated it, that he provided it to the people of Ontario and then he stuck by that particular position. That's hard to do in politics, and Tim did that.

I'm going to mention quickly three local instances where he took a stand which was very brave to take. In the last provincial election campaign, one of the issues was GO Transit to Niagara. Two of the parties, the NDP and the Liberals, said, "Yeah, we're for GO Transit in Niagara. We'll bring it there." They asked Tim, and he said—and he's from Niagara and he knows it's a popular position—"I wouldn't contemplate this until the budget is balanced." That's a principled position he took, which, with some people, was not a popular position, but he took that position.

He's a very strong advocate for West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. One of the budgets—they asked him in the budget lock-up, "Tim, you're calling for restraint and so on, so how can you possibly ever be critical of the fact that there wouldn't be funding for West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby?" He said, "No, this is my position. Even though I know and the people know"—and subsequent to that, he was a strong advocate and started petitions for the hospital. In that particular instance, when asked by the press, he was very honest and up front with it.

Another instance I saw: We met with a local organization, a public service organization. The easy thing to do when you're sitting there is to take the side of the organization against the government, which is obviously not providing enough money. Tim may be thinking in his mind where this was. I remember him sitting there. They asked questions about it and he asked questions of them: "How can you perhaps run your organization better so you don't need more money?"—words to that effect. I admired that, because that's very difficult to do. You always want to take up the criticism they might have of government.

You knew where he stood. He may have played left wing and centre in hockey, but by God he was a right-winger when it came to politics—all the way.

I was scrawling these notes down because you always try to do these notes at the appropriate time and you want to get into many different things, but I don't think that I should get into too many things other than the fact that, being from Niagara, he likes chicken wings. Everybody has to know that. Tim likes chicken wings. He likes and goes to the games of the Buffalo Bills. By the way, he's also a Boston Bruins fan despite the fact that—it's easy to say that you're a Leafs fan because politically that's good. But he's a Boston Bruins fan. He certainly could have done a lot of things differently in that regard, but he didn't.

Tim is a well-rounded person. We always see him as a political guy, but Tim has other interests out there as well, and he's a very likable individual. He always had a smile on his face when he was in politics, which we liked very much. You watched as he was able to walk around the House and interact with many people.

Tim took controversial stands. He didn't flip-flop on things. Even though some days I would have liked him to have flip-flopped on things, he didn't do that. What you saw is what you got when you saw Tim Hudak on the platform or in this House.

1050

When a government is defeated, it's hard to survive. In 2003, when the government was defeated, Tim held on to his seat. Yes, people can say it's a safe Tory seat, for instance, but when a government is being defeated and you hang on, that speaks well of the member's attachment to his constituency, and Tim was able to do that exceedingly well.

Tim, we will miss you in this House. I will miss you in this House. I'll miss you as a colleague in an adjacent riding.

We know that now you can—well, I guess you're past that stage. He was once a WWF fan: Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, "Leaping" Lanny Poffo, "Rowdy" Roddy Piper and the gang. He used to have the posters in his room for all of them. I won't reveal that, to some people, perhaps it's not really real. It's like talking about Santa Claus to a kid. Here I'm telling Tim it's not real, and I think he certainly knew that.

Tim was a friend. We got along well. He will be missed, but he'll still be around. He won't be a person who's going to disappear into the background. I know, again, that Deb will not miss him being in this House, for a lot of reasons, particularly because of being closer to home and to Miller and Maitland. He's very, very dedicated to his family, so I know he will appreciate that opportunity.

Tim, all of us in this House, regardless of our political affiliation and background, wish you well. You have been a friend in the past. You'll be a friend for a lifetime. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of Patrick Brown, the Progressive Conservative caucus and the entire Progressive Conservative Party in tribute to Tim Hudak.

Yesterday was his anniversary of becoming the Progressive Conservative leader in the House, and today he'll give his final speech as the member of provincial Parliament for Niagara West—Glanbrook, a riding which he has held for 21 years—a colleague, a confidant, at times a co-conspirator, and even, one time, a co-defendant.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a good thing Kathy's not here today.

But we were instant friends. I first met Tim at the Ottawa Convention Centre when he was a cabinet minister under Ernie Eves, and he was about to approve funding for a new state-of-the-art building. Bob Chiarelli was mayor then. Norm Sterling was the regional minister. Our dear friend, now departed, Mauril Bélanger, was the federal minister.

I remember because Tim came up to me—my husband was the Progressive Conservative candidate in Ottawa Centre—and Tim actually said to me, "You should be the candidate instead." Anyway, I get the next laugh because I get elected and my husband doesn't, but then my husband gets the final laugh because he has actually been

on Tim Hudak's talk show. Just a reminder: I'm waiting for the invitation.

Many years later, it was profound for me as a local member of provincial Parliament, because we held our first convention at the Ottawa Convention Centre under Tim Hudak's leadership. Years later, I would get elected, from that time we spoke.

I remember the day so vividly when I first entered the Progressive Conservative caucus. John Tory, in my mind, was a legend. Elizabeth Witmer, Jim Wilson, Bob Runciman, Norm Sterling, and Frank Klees all had played prominent roles in Progressive Conservative governments—including Tim Hudak. But he was the first to rise and greet myself and Christine Elliott as we walked in the room. We became friends from that day forward.

In fact, my office used to be beside the old whip's office, and because of that, there was a nice staffer there, Julie Kwiecinski. She came over to me and she said, "You'll get to know Tim Hudak. He was well brought up." After knowing him for a decade and having built a relationship with himself and his family, I can tell you, honestly, that his mother, Anne Marie, and his father, Pat, did a stand-up job.

I want to talk for a few minutes about his accomplishments because, as a cabinet minister, you do make achievements that you're very proud of. In the time he spent in three different economic portfolios, he did a lot to make sure that mining in Ontario was number one in Canada.

He did a lot after the terrorist attacks on September 11 to encourage the tourism community here in the province to be resolute and to ensure that we were open for business.

And I think we can all credit him single-handedly for the VQA and his instrumental lead in ensuring that we have more wine available from wineries in Niagara.

Tim and I don't often agree on wine. As many of you know, I replaced a very shy and retiring young man named John Baird when he became a federal minister. One of the first times I invited Tim Hudak to my riding we went to Cedarhill Golf and Country Club—which used to be owned by Bob Chiarelli's family, FYI. We sat down and Tim said, "Let's have a glass of wine with dinner." Totally tone-deaf to the fact that he loves VQA wine, I ordered a Wolf Blass. He looked at me and he said, "Did Baird put you up to that?" Apparently Baird would do this all the time.

So, not to be outdone by me and my husband—we were in a by-election in Ottawa West–Nepean, and my husband goes out to the LCBO in Nepean. As many people know, Ottawa West–Nepean and Nepean–Carleton are very close. My husband's in there and he's buying red wine for after the by-election. He's got this basket, and Tim Hudak looks down at it and he said, "Australian plonk?" Very, very upset.

I wanted to point out a few things about Tim's character that I don't think the broader public actually knows about. As Progressive Conservative leader, he

called us each and every Christmas. We appreciated that, but not as much as how much we appreciated when our staff would receive personal notes from him after they helped him, either at Queen's Park or, more likely, at our constituency offices.

The other thing that's very special to me is that he knows all of our spouses' and our children's names.

As leader, Tim Hudak made the Progressive Conservative Party family-friendly. Miller's Kids Conventions became the highlight of the year for Tories, but more importantly it became the focus for our children, young Progressive Conservatives in training. It was actually a very favourite thing for my daughter, who is growing up in her mother's footsteps, I can assure you.

Some members of this House remember that in 2009 we staged a sit-in in opposition to the harmonized sales tax, with Randy Hillier and Bill Murdoch displaying grave disorder, much to the chagrin of the previous Speaker, Speaker. But what most people don't know is that while we staged those sit-ins—we actually were in the west lobby, and—I don't know if I'm betraying any caucus confidences here—Tim Hudak sat there and, with John Yakabuski, sang Johnny Cash songs. That's something you try to forget but you just can't.

As leader, he ran on a clear and unabashed conservative message. It was bold and it was risky, but it was conservative. Since he's left as leader I often hear from people—and some of you may hear it too—"I like this new Tim Hudak," or "Why wasn't that Tim Hudak on the campaign trail?" Well, he is that Tim Hudak and he's always been that Tim Hudak, and it's the Tim Hudak that I like. And it's the Tim Hudak who would show up here all the time before he was leader—even when he was leader—and talk about what happens in Niagara West–Glanbrook. We all knew it so well.

Some of the issues that he raised daily in the House with dogged determination were always tourism. He talked a lot about the Niagara Escarpment. He talked about gypsy moths—which, for the record, he doesn't like—and he talked about fruit growers, VQA wine, the Fort Erie hospital and many other things.

He was such an expert at so many of these topics that after I listened to him and watched him, I had—I don't know if it was the fortune or misfortune in 2011 to be sent down as the surrogate while he was touring the province, to do debates for him. I was scheduled to do a few, but I think once they realized that I knew the issues just as well as Hudak they were all cancelled. So I'm kind of grateful that I sat in on all those speeches.

The 2011 election was also a very tough one for him. He spent many weeks with his wife, Deb, at SickKids hospital with his daughter Miller. We would text each other. I remember July 1—because it's a very busy day in Ottawa, as you can probably imagine—texting with him at the hospital.

We've shared many good, bad, happy and sad times. Most of you probably haven't realized this, but in one month in 2014, as he led our party, his daughter Maitland was born; he lost his close friend Jim Flaherty, who was

the husband of his seatmate, deputy leader, colleague and our friend; and he and I were served notice of a lawsuit. We went into the 2014 election one month later, but this is typical of the type of load that Tim can carry, while doing it with a smile and greeting you with warmth. He's a thoughtful, considerate colleague and a friend, and I do have a few stories.

1100

This was actually a lovely one. I had tweeted out that I was in Niagara with my mother, who's from Nova Scotia, and that we were staying at a hotel. Tim's staff found out from my staff where we were staying, and when we checked in, there was some Niagara wine and some peaches. I just thought, "Well brought up."

You could go to his home anytime. Debbie's a wonderful cook, and she would often cook and bake for the press gallery each year. But getting invited to one of their Super Bowl parties was actually quite super—many, many good times.

I couldn't go visit my family in Nova Scotia—I did this summer, without him demanding me either to bring back lobster or beer. I brought him some Nova Scotia wine. We'll see how that ticks. I don't think it will be that good, but we'll see.

This year, he spoke at my 10-year anniversary party, which was quite difficult for me. We talked about our friendship. We talked about our children, who are quite good friends, and we talked about our politics. He talked about my loyalty. We were both quite emotional, and I'm going to tell you why.

After 2014, the election defeat was hardest on him, but I was struggling with depression. He would sit with me, either here at Queen's Park or on the phone when I was at home, and he would try to boost me up. Sometimes that was daily. That's the Tim Hudak I know: well brought up, always deserving of my loyalty, always a friend.

Later this past summer, his riding association in Niagara West—Glanbrook hosted a tribute for Tim's 21 years in politics. They asked me to appear by video. I happily agreed, and I shared much of what I've shared with you today. But I was asked for five words to describe him. I'm going to be honest: I was tempted to go with "one hundred thousand job cuts," but I opted instead to go with "best Premier Ontario never had."

It should come as no surprise that when he told me he was leaving politics this summer, I cried for two hours in my constituency. He and his former staff had to call me to calm me down. So did my husband; so did my staff. I know this isn't the pit bull in lipstick that you guys are used to, but he's a pretty special friend to me.

Tim Hudak has—I'm going to have to wipe my eyes; I can't see. Tim Hudak has been, and always will be, more than an MPP to many in this room. He'll be more than a party leader and he's more than a Conservative, and I know history is going to reflect that. In the end, this might be the end of an era, but for all of us here, this is not the end of the friendship. It's not the end of Tim Hudak. I want to wish him, Maitland, Miller and his

beautiful wife, Deb, fun in retirement as they move on to the next chapter. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yes, five minutes for rebuttal, Mr. Speaker. It's truly a special honour to speak at this time and moment. Traditionally, it's for dead people. It's like being able to rebut at your own funeral. To quote one of my favourite group of philosophers, as Monte Python once said, "I'm not quite dead yet." So let me have a few last words, Speaker and colleagues, before I walk out the doors one last time.

First, thanks so much, my esteemed colleagues, for the very kind and generous words. It's fair to say that at this level politicians are skilled in the art of plausible exaggeration, so I thank them for their generosity and those memories. Lisa, you touched my heart.

I try to say to myself that I won't get emotional. I have worked hard to cultivate that hardass image over 21 years in this business. It's just bad, bad for the brand.

I'll say to Lisa that she has some very wonderful stories. We all have highs and lows in our work and in our lives, and you know who your true friends are when they're not just there for the good times but for the tough times. Thank you, Lisa.

Jim, as a veteran and a friend, and always a dear friend of my wife, Debbie, as well, as a dean of the Legislature, your veteran comments and perspective and the way you looked at my career meant a lot to me personally, so thank you.

Paul, for your irascible sense of humour—that's why you're one of my favourite New Democrats. I won't name the other one. I'll just focus on you today.

I'm sorry to say this, Norm, but now he's passed you as my second-favourite Miller on the planet. Thank you.

Joking aside, I'm going to miss this place and the people an awful lot. It has been 21 years. I've served my sentence. Hopefully, I'm getting sprung for good behaviour. But honest to God, I wouldn't change a minute of it for anything in the world. It has been incredible.

I met Debbie here, through this business. That's the best part. When we first started, actually—my desk isn't even there anymore, it's so far back in that corner. I don't think she knew me. She figured I was Tim, Tom or Bart, for those of us who were around back in 1995, one of those new Niagara guys. But I had her in my targets, and I won that day and that's the best thing about this business. She's with Miller today and couldn't be here. Then Miller and Maitland came about as part of that love. That's awesome.

This is the toughest part, Speaker—deep breath.

Nothing would make this dad more proud than to see one of them standing in this place someday as an MPP and giving back to public service. But you know kids. With Debbie and I both being somewhat on the right, I've got no doubt that they'll both be plaid-wearing, Chuck Taylor-sporting New Democrats someday, if they join this place, so it will be worth the trade-off.

I say to you, Speaker, and to the Clerk and the staff here at the Legislative Assembly, that I want to thank you. I can't imagine working with so many politicians, 107 of us characters, at a time. That ain't easy. All of the staff here, Speaker—their professionalism, their kindness, their love for this great institution is incredible, always so kind to my girls as they scampered out in the hallways and made a little mischief. They do an incredible job, and I want to thank them for everything they've done to make my experience so enjoyable.

I'm proud to see so many of my team here too, the stalwart true believers—incredible dedication and talent—who have all gone and done really well in the private sector. Congratulations. It's great seeing you guys back here in the Legislative Assembly.

Let me use these last few moments I have to give these last words of advice that you'll remember me by: If you want to sell your home, particularly in the GTA, I can now set you up for that.

We are a privileged 107. There is nobody else on this entire planet and in this province who can actually walk into this chamber. We are given a microphone and a desk by voters, and that is such a unique experience. It gives us a great power, an awesome responsibility, to come in and talk about whatever you want to talk about, to champion whatever cause. So my advice is, use it. You never know when your time is going to be up.

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To paraphrase one of my favourite presidents, Theodore Roosevelt, this fortunate 107, you'll use that mike to know great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spend yourself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.

Give people clear choices. Don't be tepid. Don't be middling. Don't bite your tongue. You don't know when the buzzer goes off. Play hard and play fair.

Over the past few decades in Ontario politics, over what I've said and how I've conducted myself, I've been a lot of different things to a lot of different people: an MPP—I was the kid; now I'm the veteran—a minister, leader, robot, frat boy, Bay Street stooge.

I'll tell you a quick story, Speaker. Remember the Working Families ads, where I went in front of a group of old-school Bay Street guys in the oak-panelled chamber? They were effective ads. The guy actually looked like me a lot, except he was younger and had broader shoulders and in better shape, so it was kind of flattering. But during candidate training, we had one of our PC candidates who said, "Yes, I know those ads aren't true, but Tim never should have gone into that meeting in the first place."

The radio guys have been fun, too. Some of my friends here in the media were kind enough to come here today for my last words. It is so much fun to be in the media because you can speak with full authority on topics you know nothing about, and there's no consequences whatsoever.

So just for the fun of it, because of my sense of humour: I've been a lot of things, but the last one I would ever want to be, and I don't think I've ever been, is Abe Simpson. What do I mean by that? The hell-in-a-hand-basket guy. I've been here a while and what I want to say, as I conclude, Speaker, is that there's always this pining nostalgia for the old days. We'll complain that things get more cynical or more polarized, the adversarial dialogue. But when you take 21 years and you take a step back, everything gets better. It really does. We can debate what's in front of our noses, the ebbs and flows. I've never seen more people involved, more people who have access to information that relates to what we do here, more people active. It's true that we'll have conflict, and when debate gets tough and clear, it's a good thing. But there's often this false nostalgia for the days when we all got along, and I suspect that if you believe that it's true—well, it may have been true if you were part of the club. But we forget that there was a time when folks drank a lot more. This place was more white and more male. The spouse at home raised the family, absent the folks who were always here.

So I leave here a less cynical person than when I arrived, and I arrived pretty bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, wide-eyed and in awe. At the end of the day, I remain an optimist. I'm less cynical, because I believe that the ultimate disinfectant is sunshine. It reaches nooks and crannies that it didn't reach the day that I arrived. It could be the sunshine itself; it could be the access to information; it could be the changing and evolving debate around ethics, around fundraising, around lobbying—the point being that people have a lot more information, a lot more right to know about what they pay their bills for, and that has been a good thing.

More importantly, there are so many more people involved in the conversation on a daily basis. It's truly incredible, when you take a step back and look at that. When I was first elected in 1995, I think I was one of the first members to have a website. I remember my chief of staff at the time, somewhat jokingly, said that the Internet was going to be a passing phase. Those of us who were there, from time to time, would get a typewritten letter in something called an envelope with a stamp on it. Today, we are deluged by suggestions from voters and from people, in all kinds of streams, and that's a good thing. It's direct interaction. There's volume, there's quality to it. Everyone's in on the conversation. It is two-way, timely, efficient and passionate. It's very egalitarian.

So this place is less the domain of the powerful and more the domain of the people every year. I hope I played a small part in that, fighting for transparency and accountability, and by being controversial enough from time to time to get people's attention and get them talking. The autism funding that was achieved by grassroots parent networking and even social media would never have been possible 20 years ago, or even 10. We're having a more genuine, active and direct connection with those who send us here, and those are all really good things.

I've been unafraid to propose some controversial things from time to time. I have dared greatly and I have been kicked around as much as anyone in this chamber, especially by my own PC caucus. But in the end, I don't regret a minute of it. To have the honour of sitting on these benches and being a voice for the things people want and believe in—it's never a lost cause for any of us. It is worth the to-and-fro. You've got a microphone, so use it. Twenty-one years ago, I got this microphone. I've used it well. It's a bit beaten up, it's a bit worn, but it still works. And now, Speaker, I hand it back to the people who put their faith in me these 21 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As this wraps up, I want to thank all the members who gave tribute for their wonderful and heartfelt feelings, and I want to thank the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook for his response.

I will give you a quick story. There was a little get-together yesterday to provide a farewell for staff and members. We were in the middle of a Board of Internal Economy meeting that I chaired, and we took a short break to pay respects. The member from Dufferin—Caledon and I had a quick word, and I basically said, "We need to take a break because we've got to do a visitation." I was quickly corrected. I said that I will make sure he understands that that was not the case of a visitation; it was my respect for the member.

Thank you very much for all that you've done for us. God bless.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can't we all just get along?

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. For the last two days, I have said that if the Liberals actually wanted to get hydro rates under control, they should stop signing ludicrous contracts. Ontario has a surplus of energy. Stop signing contracts for more. This government can't continue to sell it at a loss.

Why won't the Liberals stop signing these contracts? Oh, right: It's because the wind and solar companies donated \$1.3 million to the Liberal Party. So the Liberals keep on filling their coffers and then, in return, offer the people of Ontario Band-Aid solutions for this hydro crisis. Mr. Speaker, for once, will the government of Ontario think about the people of Ontario, not the Liberal Party?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, that's an abrupt change of tone, isn't it?

Speaker, I can tell you that, on this side, we have made choices that reflect the wishes of the public of Ontario. We have made choices, when it comes to energy, to shut

down the coal-fired plants that were damaging the health of Ontarians every single day. It was a deliberate choice to reduce our GHG emissions and to clean the air that Ontarians breathe. Is there a cost to that? Yes, there is.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, please come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's think back to the electricity system that existed in Ontario when we were elected. It had been badly neglected; important maintenance had been deferred. We were subject to brownouts and blackouts.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We now have a clean, reliable source of electricity, and we are taking steps—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I may find myself in yesterday's circumstance, where I move to warnings. I'm just putting that on the table now. If it continues, I will.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Acting Premier: Liberal math struck again yesterday. So let's see how the Acting Premier would do on this math test. If the Minister of Energy is correct in his claim that exporting power reduced the cost by \$230 million, as he said in the Legislature yesterday, how do they justify the fact that this government has given away \$3 billion in power in the last three years? What I want to know from the Acting Premier is, how much have the people of Ontario lost? How much more are they paying because of your exports of energy to Pennsylvania, New York and Michigan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to a website called gridwatch.ca. Some of you will know this website. I refer to it regularly. It uses IESO data to, on an hour-by-hour basis, talk about where we're generating electricity, where we're exporting it and where we are importing it. It's a really interesting look into our electricity system.

The bottom line is that we are part of a larger system. We import electricity when we need to. We export electricity when we have excess. Different parts of the province need to export and import at different times. It is part of a larger system.

We have a clean, reliable source of electricity in this province. We've eliminated coal, which saves us \$4 billion in health care costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Acting Premier: It's almost amusing to hear the government trying to reconcile \$230 million in, \$3 billion out, and trying to spin that it's a profit.

Let's talk about some more fuzzy Liberal math: cancelling a 10% discount and bringing in an 8% Band-Aid solution.

The government is still oblivious to how they're hurting Ontario families. The Premier said we don't have

a plan. Well, I have been very clear: Step one, stop signing these contracts for energy we don't need; and step two, stop this reckless fire sale of Hydro One.

My question to the Acting Premier is, will you actually act on energy? Will you stop signing these contracts and will you stop the fire sale? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let's take a look back to 2002. Ontario paid \$500 million to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, second time. And I'm inches away from warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In 2002, when the Conservatives were in office, Ontario paid \$500 million to import electricity because we were not producing enough.

In 2003, Ontario paid \$400 million to import electricity because we did not have the capacity to generate that electricity.

Speaker, we have made—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Reliability was a real concern, as was the environment. A 127% increase in the use of coal; we have now eliminated—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

New question?

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. On April 19, the former Minister of Children and Youth Services said that she had “read the clinical expert committee” report on autism services.

On May 16, the former minister said that they were “continuing to listen to experts” and that her plan was “based in large part on ... the clinical expert committee.”

But we just learned in the Toronto Star that on April 18, before the minister made those comments, the expert committee wrote to the minister. They tried to caution the minister that her plan was “detrimental to vulnerable kids” and that there was “no evidence to support” kicking kids off the wait-list. So clearly she had not read the report or listened to the experts.

If the minister had read the report, was she intentionally misleading the House?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the leader opposite for the question. I know he publicly recognized the work of this ministry for accommodating the children who were on the wait-list for IBI services, as we transition into a new program.

What we're trying to do as a government is to establish a new program here in Ontario that will open up 16,000 new spots. We had a challenge here in Ontario with a long wait-list. What we're planning to do is, by June of next year, build a new system that will allow for children to be diagnosed earlier. We will open up new spots here in the province of Ontario and we'll put in a system that allows young people to reach their full potential. That's what this government and I think all members of this House want to achieve: give young people the ability to find success here in the province of Ontario, regardless of their ability.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: Let's look at what the experts actually told the Liberals. They clarified: “The committee's report cited by the ministry did not propose imposing an age cut-off.”

The letter went on to say the government “initiated” action “prematurely, without sufficient consultation” and that the “services outlined in the new autism program last spring ‘will fall short of meeting the needs of these children.’”

This government has put families of children with autism through unimaginable pain and stress. This government looked those parents in the eyes and told them that they were following expert advice. This, simply, was categorically false.

How could this government turn their backs on these vulnerable children and their families? How could they do that? How could they look them in the face and blatantly lie to them?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw. If it happens again, the member will be passed on his question. Withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I think the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, has to recognize that this dedicated half-a-billion-dollar investment into our children is probably the most significant investment into any autism program here in this country. In addition to this, we are setting up a new autism program here in the province of Ontario that will allow young people to get the skills they need and the ability to access the programs and services they need so they can actually get out there and reach their potential.

I think the member opposite should be standing and actually saying back to this government that we made the right decision. We're heading in the right direction and that the member will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: I appreciate that the government has finally realized that autism doesn't end at five. I realize I've been warned, but, Mr. Speaker, I've been so frustrated with how these families have been treated.

I know the government is touting their new plan. They claim there's funding for children kicked off this wait-list, but I have parents tweeting, emailing and calling almost every day. They told me they have not received a single cent to help cover the costs of IBI treatment, despite this announcement happening—not a single cent.

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So I have a very specific question for the government and I would like a specific answer. Mr. Speaker, how many families that were kicked off the wait-list have received the promised funding? Has there been any funding delivered to the families kicked off the wait-list as of now?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, when I became the minister for this file, the first thing we did was that we sent out a letter to 24,000 families here in the province of Ontario, a letter from the ministry and from me as the minister, explaining the transition that was about to take place.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we set up a 1-800 number where parents across the province and families could call in and get real-time information about the transition that's taking place.

Mr. Speaker, we've dedicated half a billion dollars over the five years to transition into a new program. And yes, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Coteau: What I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to do is, rather than standing there and constantly complaining about this program, to get behind parents. Show them the direction in which they can access programs. Each and every one of their offices—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Acting Premier. The government promised that their throne speech would be a reset. People were counting on the government to make life a little bit easier, to make sure that they could get a good paycheque and fair benefits, to fix our hospitals and schools, but instead the people of this province got a great big letdown on Monday.

It wasn't a reset; it was a disappointment. People know it's time for action in this province. Why doesn't the government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, perhaps we could review some of the highlights of the throne speech that demonstrate we are committed to making life better for Ontarians. I think 100,000 new child care spaces is

something we can all applaud—100,000 new child care spaces.

A significant reduction in electricity bills is something we can all support. The third party has been calling for this action. We're now in a position to take that action. We are reducing the electricity bills by 8%, and a further reduction for those who live in the most rural part of our province. We're also investing more to help companies reduce their consumption of electricity and they will save money as a result of that.

Speaker, we have responded and will continue to respond to the wishes of the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure New Democrats were not the only MPPs this past summer who were out talking to people, and more importantly, listening to people. Every backbencher on that side of the House and every minister must have felt the disappointment from the people of Ontario as we did. Whether it was the decision to privatize Hydro One or the choice to ignore crumbling hospitals and schools, this is not what people hoped for. I'm sure that every Liberal minister and every Liberal member must have heard that.

Does this government understand that? Do they understand where the people of this province are? Do they understand how disappointed—and in many parts of this province, upset—people are about the functioning or mis-functioning of this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I almost think that the leader of the third party hasn't been listening to one of the things that we are doing on this side of the House, including 100,000 new child care spaces, including reducing the costs of electricity in this province.

Speaker, what I've heard a lot about is the impact of free tuition for Ontarians with family incomes of \$50,000 or less. I can tell you that just yesterday I met with a mom who told me that, because of this, her children will now be able to go on to college or to university. I've met with young people in grade 11 and grade 12 who looked at me and said, "Really?" when I said tuition would be free for those with incomes of \$50,000 or less. In fact, the middle class, up to a \$160,000 income, will benefit from the changes we're making on tuition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We're listening to the people of Ontario, and what they're telling us is that they want something better. They deserve something better, Speaker. They are worried about their future, but more than that, they're worried about whether there will be a future for the next generation in this province. Instead of hope, the people of this province are feeling extremely let down.

Privatization, flat wages, robbing schools and hospitals of the resources they need—that's not what people voted for, Speaker. Is this government ready to acknowledge that they have gone off course and to commit to making big changes in direction today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are many items I'd like to highlight—steps we are taking to make life easier

for people—but let me focus on investments we're making in our youth: an extra \$250 million over two years to help 150,000 young Ontarians focus on skills development, on labour market connections, on entrepreneurship and on innovation. We're investing in these young people because we know that if we make the investments, that will be repaid many, many times over as they enter the workforce and make a real contribution to this province.

When it comes to child care: as I said, 100,000 new spaces, which means that more people will be able to get that solid foundation so that when they go into full-day kindergarten—which is another initiative that we're very proud of on this side—when those young people go to school, they're going to be able to learn to their absolute maximum, and we will allow those parents of those children to participate as well.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. I was hopeful that Monday's throne speech would have been one that was indicating a session of action that we were going to have here in Ontario, but instead what we have is a Premier who remains dead-set on privatizing Hydro One. The government is defending an \$11 minimum wage instead of taking action on a \$15 minimum wage. There is no plan whatsoever to improve the quality of jobs in Ontario or to fix the schools and hospitals in this province. Child care, which this Deputy Premier seems to want to talk about a lot, remains far too expensive for far too many families, and that's not changing.

It is not a reset; it is yet another disappointment. Why is this government letting people down yet again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We on this side acknowledge that there is always more to do, and we always work hard to make things better. But I tell you, I think the leader of the third party has a kind of—I don't know what the opposite of rose-coloured glasses is, but they're dark glasses that she's looking at this great province through.

What we see is an economy which is growing: 6.1% growth over the past two years—leading the country. When it comes to unemployment, our unemployment rate has dropped to 6.7%. That has been lower than the national average for 16 straight months.

Our kids are graduating. There was a graduation rate of 68% when we were elected in 2003; it's now an 85.5% graduation rate—huge new opportunities for all of those young people who are graduating from high school, who are moving on to post-secondary education and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people in this province need hope, not another letdown by their government. This province is at a key moment in time. Without big changes, things are going to get a heck of a lot worse for the people of this province. Instead of getting to work,

the government is making things harder, making life harder for folks.

Will this Wynne government finally change course and start taking real steps that make a real difference in people's lives?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I've been informed by my caucus mates that maybe it's orange-coloured glasses that they're wearing; they make everything look dark and gloomy. I can tell you, any objective observer would say that things are better in Ontario now than they've been in some time, and it's because on this side, we made hard choices. We made choices to invest in infrastructure, to invest in our young people through education, to invest in our health care system.

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Our economy is continuing to grow and expand. We are attracting immigrants from all over the world who are choosing to make Ontario their home. We're number one in foreign direct investment.

Yes, there's always more work to do and our focus is always on making things better for those who are facing tough times, but to make the suggestion that all is doom and gloom in Ontario is just not a reflection of reality.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps I was a bit presumptive to think the Liberal MPPs actually listened to people over the course of the summer, because I certainly have a whole different story from the people of Ontario than the Liberals seem to have.

People didn't want Hydro One sold off. That's what they told me. Eighty per cent of people don't want Hydro One privatized. Jobs without benefits and wages that you can't live on, schools and hospitals that need billions of dollars in repairs—that is not what the Premier of this province promised when she ran her election campaign a couple of years ago.

But government isn't just ignoring the problems, they are making the problems worse here in Ontario. Will this Wynne government stop making things worse and start taking action on the priorities that matter to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Certainly the priorities of the people of Ontario were indeed reflected in the throne speech. We heard loud and clear that people want some relief on their electricity costs and that's why we're moving forward with a rebate in the amount of the provincial portion of the HST, an 8% reduction in their hydro bills, and more for those in our most rural parts of the province. We heard loud and clear that people with young children are really looking for more child care options and that's why we're committed to 100,000 new child care spaces, starting in 2017. We are taking action on infrastructure because we hear from people that the daily commute is really preventing people from spending good, quality time with their families.

We are making the priorities of the people of Ontario our priorities, and we are acting on those priorities.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is also to the Acting Premier. I'm sure you're very familiar with His Worship Hector Macmillan, the mayor of Trent Hills. He's joining us in the gallery today. He has pancreatic cancer but, like one of my constituents who is suffering from breast and brain cancer, OHIP won't fund the potentially lifesaving procedure.

He said that he has been "essentially murdered" and "sentenced to die" by the government. And what happened when he spoke out? He was told by the government to sit down and shut up, and now they're threatening to delay his OHIP panel. He was scolded for trying to save his life and for speaking out on behalf of the thousands of Ontarians every year who are candidates for the same potentially lifesaving treatment.

We all know that this government doesn't like its critics, but can they really defend trying to muzzle a dying man?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mayor Macmillan, sir, thank you for joining us here today. I want to start by saying how very, very sorry I am that you're facing this diagnosis, this challenge, the biggest challenge of your life, and your family and your loved ones are facing that challenge with you.

I also want to say how very sorry I am that you have lost confidence in health care in this province. It's my job, and I want to do everything I can to restore that confidence, sir.

I can't begin to imagine what you're going through, the experience that you've faced, yourself and your family, your friends, your loved ones, and, sir, I can only hope, were I to face a similar challenge, that I would demonstrate the courage and the fortitude that you have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As sensitive as this is, I remind all members that questions are put to the Chair and the answers are put to the Chair, and also a kind reminder that there is no participation from members in the gallery.

Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the compassion from the Minister of Health, but this is happening far too often. We've seen billions wasted, literally, throughout the health care system and other ministries in the government, and at a time when Hector and other people are facing life-threatening diseases. Sometimes they may only have a couple of months. It's the health care system that we need to work within that has to open up and limit the barriers that he faces.

My father died of cancer, and it was the worst six months of my life. I know what Hector is going through. I spent the morning with him. We've spoken many times. I didn't hear that you were going to help him.

I think we have to recognize that we do have two-tiered health care in the province, and that it is limiting for people like Hector. He's courageously taking a stand.

But I want to know, will you help him? Will you look within your department? Will you make sure he gets that life-saving surgery? And will you help other patients across Ontario who are fundraising for basic health care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I am doing absolutely everything I can. I think it's important for all of us to understand that difficult decisions such as this are governed by the Health Insurance Act and the associated regulations. I have absolutely no discretion or ability to approve or reject an application that comes forward in that context. To do so would be a violation of that act by myself.

I do understand, having spoken with Mayor Macmillan, that his prognosis may have in fact changed for the better in terms of the staging of his illness. I believe it's important that as a society, from the bureaucrats to the highest level of clinical experts, we demonstrate the flexibility, if a condition changes, if a prognosis changes, to have the ability to provide the appropriate and best course of care in that case.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier on behalf of the people of Oshawa. People in Oshawa are coming to a tipping point. If we are going to keep building vehicles in Oshawa, this Liberal government needs to step up and get behind Oshawa's auto workers.

Today it's Oshawa, but the negotiations between General Motors and Unifor will set the tone for the future of good auto jobs across the province. People haven't heard from the auto czar Ray Tanguay, and people know that ministers crossing their fingers and hoping for the best is not a strategy.

Will the government commit right here today to make auto jobs a real priority for this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. I don't think we could be any more clear than we've been, as a government, with regard to support to the auto sector. There is not a subnational government anywhere in North America that has been a stronger champion of the auto sector than the province of Ontario. In fact, the Oshawa plant would not even be there today had it not been for this government, with lukewarm support from the NDP and absolutely no support from the PCs when we made billion-dollar investments in the auto sector, including Oshawa.

Both parties are negotiating hard. The negotiations appear to be going well. We wish them well in that collective bargaining process. We have an obligation not to get in the middle of that. At the same time, both parties know how supportive we've been in the past. Both

parties know that we will continue to be supportive in the future. Getting that plant a mandate for the future is our number one priority, and we'll do everything we can and need to do to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Over the summer, I spent a lot of time speaking with people in Oshawa who are very concerned about the future of our city. Some of them work directly in the auto sector, but lots of them don't. Whether it's people working for GM in any of the industry spinoff jobs or all of the jobs supported by the sector, people know how important GM is to Oshawa. They're worried about what losing these good jobs could mean for the next generation.

1150

Ontario's New Democrats are in full support of efforts to keep and create jobs in Ontario's auto sector, not just for today but for future generations of Ontarians. Government commitment to automotive should be ongoing, unwavering and unshakable. Will the government get off the sidelines and commit to doing its part to keep these jobs in Oshawa and in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government has never, ever been on the sidelines. In fact, we've always been in the playing field. We've been running harder and more aggressively than any government in North America when it comes to support for this very important sector. It is important to the people of Oshawa. It's also important to all the people in Ontario and our entire economy that we do everything we can to ensure that there's a future mandate for the plant in Oshawa, that there's a future mandate for Chrysler in Brampton, that there's a future mandate—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara Falls.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —for the plants in Windsor, the engine plants in Windsor, and all of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When you pay attention to the chair, you know that I'm standing. The member from Niagara Falls, come to order, because I don't think you heard me the first time.

Please carry on.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will continue to be a champion for this sector. What I'll ask of the member is to get on the same page as their leader, because they still propose a tax hike that would put a corporate tax hike on Oshawa and all other future investments that would hurt us more than help us. It's something that she really should look into with her own—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for Ontario's

Poverty Reduction Strategy. Firstly, I have to say congratulations on your new position. Anyone who digs a hole in the snow in minus-35-degree weather in the winter to truly understand homelessness deserves to be the Minister of Housing and poverty reduction.

As Ontario continues to grow, we have to make sure that not only my riding of Kingston and the Islands but all of our communities remain affordable and accessible to people of all income levels. Ontario's updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy will develop a new portable housing benefit that will transform the housing system.

Will the minister explain what this benefit is and how it will make the social housing system more efficient for Ontarians seeking housing assistance?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for that great question, and I'd like to thank her for her continued advocacy and focus on Ontario's social issues.

very important to our government and to me. The member is right about the portable housing benefit. Once developed, the benefit will have a major effect on improving the efficiency of social housing in Ontario. Currently, Ontarians in need of rental assistance rely on various programs across the province, many of which are tied to specific units at a specific address. The portable housing benefit would give people more flexibility to choose where they live. This means that when a person moves, the benefit moves with them. This will mean more consistent support, more choice for people in need, as well as more flexibility for those who deliver the service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, last Friday I was honoured to announce that the community of Kingston, located in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, is receiving over \$330,000 in new funding for the Survivors of Domestic Violence—Portable Housing Benefit Pilot program. I know that Sheldon Laidman of the city of Kingston was very pleased that there were sufficient funds to cover all 30 families on the waiting list in this category.

Kingston Interval House provides emergency shelter and second-stage housing for women, children and youth who are fleeing violent circumstances. Last year, the centre received over 2,500 crisis calls from women suffering from domestic violence who were looking for emergency support, safe shelter and counselling. In the same year, 250 women and their children were living at Kingston Interval House.

Can the minister explain to the House how this benefit will help the survivors of domestic violence, such as those at Kingston Interval House, find safe and affordable housing?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for a second great question. Domestic violence is a very serious problem that crosses every social and economic boundary. It will not be tolerated in Ontario. That's why, together with our

federal government counterparts, we're investing more than \$20 million over two years in the Survivors of Domestic Violence—Portable Housing Benefit Pilot. The pilot will provide ongoing assistance to approximately 1,000 survivors of domestic violence each year. Through the pilot project—

Interjections.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Good number. Through the pilot program, survivors of domestic violence will have the option to receive a portable housing benefit so that they can immediately find housing in their community instead of having to wait until a social housing unit becomes available. Ensuring that housing assistance is flexible and not tied to one particular residence will help keep those fleeing domestic abuse safe and support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, as you know, Ontario has been hit by moderate to severe drought this year. Farmers are saying this drought is burning off their crops and their livelihoods. Recent rains have come too late to be of any help. For many farmers, the 2016 growing season will be a year to forget.

I know that rural issues are rarely on this government's mind, but farmers feed cities. Will this government promise they won't turn their backs on our farmers, and what are you doing for those in need right now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know that my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has been working very hard with farmers right now. We are working on a number of assistance programs. I know that he has been out meeting with them. There are significant—up to 20%—reductions on electricity coming. We are working on offset programs.

I have personally, on climate change, been working with the OFA on offsets and assistance to farmers. I've probably been on over 50 farm visits now across Ontario, listening to farmers on drought issues. We expect, as we do with our colleagues in western Canada, that we are seeing permanent changes to our climate which are going to affect weather patterns. The drought and these unprecedented heat waves that all Ontarians are expecting are going to make the challenge of farming more difficult. Don McCabe from the OFA is taking a leadership role right now—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Acting Premier: Summer rainfall is highly variable in Ontario. This is always the case. But this year, instead of some farmers getting a little and others a lot, it has been a case of some getting a little and others getting nothing. Beyond a lack

of water, many crops have been set back by drought-related weed and insect infestations. The drought is making it tougher to fight weeds and insects, but your government is banning neonics, making it even tougher for farmers. So I ask: Where is this government's support for farmers to deal with this drought, especially those whose insurance won't be covering the loss of both crops and livelihoods?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As you know, Mr. Speaker, we have a very strong range of business risk management programs to assist producers, including production insurance, the Risk Management Program and AgriInvest. I know that my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs—we've been saying and preparing for a long time for this, while the official opposition denied climate change was happening. We have known very well that both our farmers and people who work in forestry are going to start to experience and are experiencing unprecedented new patterns of weather. The jet stream alone that moves weather through Canada is already 20% slower than it used to be, and that dramatically is changing the length of rain.

I did not hear the member opposite talk about climate change once, or that our climate action plan, developed with the OFA, focuses on agriculture and resilience, for everything from greenhouses to resilient crops. We are massively investing in those things.

1200

MERCURY POISONING

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la premi  re ministre par int  rim.

Scientists studying the issue of mercury contamination in Grassy Narrows, paid in part by your government, said that it is possible to clean up the Wabigoon River. Great news. Yet the Premier, producing no evidence whatsoever, said no to cleaning the river. Now government scientists are saying that clear-cutting around Grassy Narrows territory will disturb the mercury, and "no one is tracking the ... implications."

Why is your government so quick to jump and say yes to logging and no to cleaning?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite and the people of this province that our government is absolutely committed to working with Grassy Narrows First Nation and the federal government on this very important issue, Speaker.

I understand and I am sympathetic to the concerns of Grassy Narrows First Nation. We have already taken action on the recommendations of the recently released report for Grassy Narrows First Nation. We're spending \$300,000 to support water, sediment and fish sampling, and this includes fieldwork to determine the current levels of mercury and to provide critical information needed to develop options to remediate the English-Wabigoon River. We look forward to working and meeting with Chief Fobister regularly to assure progress is being made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is rather interesting that you committed in May to fund the fieldwork recommended by the scientists, but soon the river will freeze up and the chance to conduct the fieldwork will be gone for another year.

Why is it that, after you've made the commitment, there has been no fieldwork going on at Grassy Narrows? When is the government going to come through with their commitment? Really, when are you going to clean up the river? Speaker, water is life.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As a matter of fact, Minister Zimmer, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and I have a formal political committee, of which Chief Fobister is a member, and we meet every month for several hours and review the entire implementation. Over \$600,000 is currently being invested in the First Nation to run their own testing, and our scientists run alongside. This is one of the most comprehensive studies, and Chief Fobister has been very pleased with the progress. I and Minister Zimmer make regular visits to Grassy Narrows and the Premier met recently with Chief Fobister to review all of that.

The science team led by Dr. Rudd is continuing its work. Our scientists are working alongside, and there's third-party science verification and the development of an implementation plan to remediate mercury in the river. I can't imagine we could be doing more.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of International Trade. Early this summer, our government expanded our cabinet, which included the creation of a stand-alone Ministry of International Trade. I know the minister has been very busy this summer building his new ministry and mandate.

During the past few weeks, the minister has been travelling across the province meeting with municipalities and business leaders. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please share with the House his goals for the new ministry and what it means to my constituents of Scarborough-Agincourt?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you to the member from Agincourt for asking.

I was very pleased and excited when I learned that the Premier would be creating the first-ever Ministry of International Trade. Over the last two years, we have been working hard to identify opportunities for Ontario. We have led many missions and supervised the signing of many business agreements, and have secured nearly \$4 billion in investment for the province. As a new ministry, we can deepen our efforts and dedicate time and resources to further this success.

Speaker, I want to continue to target key markets abroad where Ontario businesses can profit, and I want to

continue engaging our business sector and work with them to identify ways our government can help.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: In Monday's throne speech, the government reaffirmed its commitment to international trade, particularly trade missions.

Having heard the minister's plan for his ministry, I'm confident that he is working diligently to increase Ontario's presence abroad and bring jobs and investment to the province. Last fall, I witnessed first-hand how hard the minister worked in organizing the China trade mission, which was a great success.

I understand the value of trade missions. One cannot create business relationships without face-to-face contact. Despite this, some people continue to criticize, or doubt the value of trade missions.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain to the House how trade missions benefit the people of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, trade missions give us an opportunity to meet people face to face, to forge new relationships, strengthen old ones and to sell Ontario. But what does that mean for Ontario? It means convincing foreign companies to open operations in our province, where Ontarians will be employed. It means 200 jobs from our Israel mission, 150 from India, 1,700 from the 2015 mission to China and 1,400 from another mission to China in 2014. It means increased business at hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions when foreign delegations take up our invitation to visit Ontario. And it means working with companies in northern Ontario that have challenges exporting over such long distances.

Speaker, trade missions make a difference.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Deputy Premier. We now know that the reality of your electricity rebate is 36 cents a day.

In my riding, this is what your hydro crisis looks like. There are thousands of cases dealing with:

—people who can't cope with the stress of making their hydro payments and who are desperately begging for help;

—people defaulting, adding to the growing list of those in arrears;

—people destitute and needing my office to seek bridge funding;

—people on load limiters, like we're in a Third World country;

—residents and businesses crushed by delivery charges in rural areas;

—residents and businesses forced to pay massive balloon payments because of an inept billing system;

—residents and businesses stuck with broken or dysfunctional meters from the failed smart meter program;

—farms collapsing because of stray voltage;

—businesses cutting jobs or shutting down all together.

Can the Deputy Premier please tell us how she came up with 36 cents as the answer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I wait with great anticipation for the supplementary, in which the PC Party will outline their plan to reduce electricity costs.

What I can tell you is what our plans are. We are reducing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are taking 8% off hydro bills. We're cutting delivery charges for the most rural customers by 20%. And we're empowering industrial businesses to reduce their bills by one third through the industrial conservation initiative, Speaker.

I do want to highlight other programs that are there for people who are facing real financial challenges, particularly the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which saves eligible low- and moderate-income households an average of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: To the Deputy Premier: You are not the one in the grocery line counting out your last coins to try to cover food purchases. You're not the one burning your staircase to heat your home.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Through you, Mr. Speaker: The Liberal government is not the one hitchhiking to work because you can't afford a car that you need to get to your job in order to pay your electricity bill. These are real stories from my riding.

Will the Deputy Premier finally admit that they have lost all control of the electricity situation in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

1210

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to go back to the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It saves—and I correct my record—an average of \$430 per year. Now, one of your caucus mates suggested that it wasn't his job to inform constituents of this program. But I say that it is your responsibility as MPPs of all the people to inform people about the Ontario Electricity Support Program—that is, therefore, people in low- and moderate-income families—to give them the relief they deserve.

This is in addition to the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for qualifying individuals and families, up to \$1,008 per year, with a maximum of \$1,148 per year for qualifying seniors. Our reductions are on top of these initiatives designed to support those with the lowest incomes.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The chief government whip is warned.

New question.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

POLITIQUES DU GOUVERNEMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Acting Premier. The throne speech was called the plan to build Ontario up for everyone, but there's nothing to build up over 1.8 million Ontarians with disabilities who still face barriers when trying to get a job, an education, adequate housing or even basic health care services. According to the alliance working on behalf of Ontarians with disabilities, nothing in the speech will help a quarter of a million students with special education needs in Ontario schools. There is nothing to ensure that they will get an equal shot at the education they deserve.

If this speech is about the Wynne government's priorities and building everyone up, why wasn't there anything in the throne speech about them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that the minister responsible for disabilities would like to answer that question, and I will certainly make sure she's aware that that question was asked and to get that answer.

This government has been very focused on improving opportunities for people with disabilities. In fact, I remember very fondly when we passed the AODA, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I remember so clearly the people who filled this chamber and supported our actions for people with disabilities.

When it comes to people on ODSP, I'm sure that the Minister of Community and Social Services would love to speak about initiatives designed to support people with disabilities to get back into the labour market. There's a significant focus on this very important issue because we know that we are all stronger when all of us have the opportunity to contribute fully to our communities and to our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

M. Michael Mantha: Encore, ma question est à la première ministre par intérim. J'ai écouté très prochainement le discours du trône. Il n'y avait aucune référence au sujet des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes.

Nous avons besoin d'une université francophone; c'est clair. À l'annonce de la prorogation, tous les médias sociaux se sont allumés demandant une université francophone.

Le premier pas est simple : mettre en place un conseil de gouvernance. C'est simple. C'est clair. Pourquoi le gouvernement a-t-il oublié plus de 600 000 Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes? Combien de temps est-ce qu'on devra attendre encore pour une université franco?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the minister responsible for francophone affairs.

Interjection: That's not a supplementary; that's not even close.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: En français.

Une voix: Pas supplémentaire.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci au membre pour sa question. Je suis bien fière de pouvoir discuter de ça aujourd'hui. Puis, je veux réaffirmer que les choses avancent. Nous mettons en place un conseil de planification. Le projet de loi de la députée qui avait pensé accélérer le processus demande un grand effort de planification si on veut être responsable.

Je veux encore réitérer à la francophonie ontarienne que le gouvernement de l'Ontario, le gouvernement Wynne, prend des actions concrètes. Si on regarde le discours du trône—monsieur le Président, je me suis promenée partout à travers la province cet été, et tout ce que j'ai entendu, c'était des actions que nous avons prises aujourd'hui : les garderies, l'électricité, balancer le budget. Tout est en fonction de ça.

Donc, pour le membre de dire qu'on a oublié les Franco-Ontariens, je suis complètement—pas du tout, monsieur le Président.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I just wanted to take a moment to explain something. I've given some leeway in question period, because of the throne speech, to have a little give and take. That stops this week. Next week, I'll be more specific that your questions and supplementary questions stay focused on a single issue. The other way is for debate, where the throne speech brings out opportunity to speak about the generic condition of the province. Starting next week, I will be a little less lenient when it comes to questions: They must be related to the questions put in the supplementaries.

New question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. First, Speaker, through you, I would like to congratulate her on her new responsibility.

For many Ontarians, buying a home is the largest investment they'll make in their life. When making such a purchase, especially one with this magnitude, it's extremely important to ensure that there are no hidden problems with the home, whether it's a house or a condo. Consumers often rely on a home inspection report from a home inspector to make informed decisions when buying or selling a home.

Can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services please inform the House on how our government is ensuring that Ontarians who purchase a home are protected in making this very important investment?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for his question. My ministry has recognized the need to establish a new licensing program to provide better consumer protection when making a decision as important as buying a home.

Just last month, together we announced our government's plan to introduce legislation that will take important steps towards increasing consumer protection in the field of home inspection. We want to improve consistency and the quality of evaluations home inspectors provide across the province. Consumers hiring a home inspector should be able to count on a certain level of qualification and expertise, and our government intends to address these issues.

Through this initiative and many others, I will continue to work with Ontarians to ensure that they have full confidence in the investments they make. I look forward to providing more information on our proposed legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary.

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for her answer, and I want to thank her for the work she's doing to protect homebuyers and instill confidence in Ontarians. I want to take this opportunity to thank her predecessor, Minister Oraziotti, and Minister MacCharles for their hard work on this particular file. As you know, it's very, very important to me.

Buying a home is equally exciting and stressful, and it's important that consumers be careful and are well informed when making this big investment. I'm happy to hear the minister is committed to ensuring quality service for consumers.

I know Ontario has the largest real estate market in Canada. The process of buying a home, especially for new homeowners, can seem daunting and overwhelming. Can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services inform this House how our government is helping Ontarians achieve homeownership?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you again to the member for his question but also his advocacy on this file.

The Real Estate and Business Brokers Act has been very effective in adding accountability and enhancing consumer protection to the real estate industry. The act is administered by the Real Estate Council of Ontario, referred to as RECO, which regulates real estate brokerages, brokers and salespeople. As a result, consumers have access to a more open and transparent real estate market. Real estate professionals are bound by a code of ethics and are registered with RECO, ensuring compliance across the industry.

Our proposed legislation on licensing home inspectors will ensure Ontarians feel greater ease in entering the housing market and purchasing the right home for themselves or their family. I look forward to working with prospective homebuyers as well as professionals in the industry such as our outgoing colleague, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario Real Estate Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me apologize to the House, particularly the opposition, for my 30 seconds of clarification. It should have been done after, and I apologize. It could have cost, and I beg your forgiveness for it.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1220 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Mid-Autumn or Moon Festival, one of the most significant holidays for families of Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese heritage around the world. It is an occasion that is celebrated with family reunions and many great events across the province. This is a time to get together with families, to light lanterns, share mooncakes and give thanks. It's also a time to celebrate the autumn harvest.

As you know, my riding of Oxford has had a special relationship with Taiwan since the days of George Leslie Mackay, who travelled there as a missionary in the late 1800s. So I want to take this opportunity to offer best wishes to them and everyone who is celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival today. I hope that they have the opportunity to celebrate with family and friends and that they have much to be thankful for this year.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank them for all their contributions. On behalf of the PC caucus and the people of Oxford, I want to wish them all the best and a happy Moon or Mid-Autumn Festival.

BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY LAW

Mr. Paul Miller: Last month, I wrote to the federal government, including Prime Minister Trudeau, about the situation at US Steel Canada and the country's bankruptcy and insolvency processes which no longer fit their purpose. My letter was co-signed by several MPPs, by federal MPs from the NDP and Conservative parties and by the head of the United Steelworkers local.

In this letter, we asked the federal government to establish a public inquiry into the restructuring and creditor protection process at US Steel Canada. Yesterday, Hamilton city council endorsed this request. We also asked the federal government to initiate comprehensive reform of Canada's bankruptcy insolvency laws, including the replacement of the antiquated Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act with modern legislation that protects all stakeholders, including workers and retirees.

The manifest failures of this restructuring process have been devastating to tens of thousands of Ontarians. It's not the first time that Ontario workers and retirees have suffered because of inadequate protection in the restructuring process. Unless we see rapid whole-scale reform, it will not be the last time we see this.

I ask the provincial government to join MPPs, MPs, the city of Hamilton and the United Steelworkers in our call for a bankruptcy insolvency process that puts Canadian workers and retirees first. We need immediate action

to protect other Ontario workers, retirees and communities from the same fate, and we need the provincial government on our side.

TERRY FOX DAY

Ms. Soo Wong: This Sunday, September 18 is the second annual Terry Fox Day in Ontario. Last June, the Legislature unanimously passed my private member's bill, the Terry Fox Day Act, to designate the second Sunday after Labour Day as Terry Fox Day. Terry Fox Day serves as a yearly reminder that we must continue to spread Terry's message of courage, hope and determination.

The 36th annual Terry Fox Run will take place across communities in Canada and around the world. This non-competitive event for individuals, families and groups celebrates Terry's legacy and helps to keep his dreams of finding a cure for cancer alive. Besides participating in the annual Terry Fox Run, thousands of students across Canada and around the world, including the students in Terry Fox school in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, will also organize various community and fundraising activities supporting the Terry Fox Foundation.

I want to thank Principal Dean Malvern, his entire staff and students for raising thousands of dollars every year to continue to honour Terry Fox's commitment and his spirit and to find a cure for cancer.

I'm looking forward to joining Councillor Ainslie and the entire Scarborough team at Cedar Brook Park this Sunday.

I want to encourage all Ontarians this Sunday to reflect on the contribution of Terry Fox to this great province, but also to the country called Canada.

HENRY AND BARB LANSINK

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize two outstanding citizens from my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Long-time community builders, philanthropists and hospital supporters Henry and Barb Lansink recently donated \$1.5 million to the Hanover and District Hospital. The Lansinks' very generous donation means that the local hospital will be getting a new CT scanner. This addition will not only improve care for patients in the region but it will speed up access as patients at HDH will no longer need to be transported to another hospital for a diagnosis.

Hospital president and CEO Katrina Wilson says the transportation savings can be redirected into additional patient support. She also says the Lansinks' donation is the largest one in their hospital's history, and to quote her, it "provides us with the rare and wonderful opportunity to provide even better health care to the citizens of Hanover and our surrounding catchment area."

The Lansink family has a long track record of giving to the Hanover community, where they have lived for 46 years. Barb was a long-standing Hanover hospital board governor who provided 24 years of volunteer service to

the hospital. Her husband, Henry, says, "This is the perfect time for Barb and I to make a donation like this, while we can know patients are receiving the quality care they deserve."

CT scans are a valuable diagnostic tool. They're able to detect some conditions that conventional X-rays cannot and are also useful for monitoring a patient's progress during or after treatment.

I know the members in the Legislature will join me in acknowledging this great contribution from the Lansink family to the Hanover community. Thank you, Lansinks.

CHARLES HENRY BYCE

Mr. Michael Mantha: On Saturday, September 17, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association will be unveiling the first monument to commemorate Charles Henry Byce, the most highly decorated indigenous soldier of the Second World War.

Charlie Byce was born in Chapleau, a northern Ontario town located in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. Byce spent time in the residential school system but he never forgot who he was.

When it came time, Byce proudly answered the call to fight for civilization, much like his father had in World War I. His story of unimaginable bravery in 1945 is not well known and deserves broader recognition.

He served with the Lake Superior Regiment and was awarded the British Military Medal for leadership and bravery on the 9th of January, 1945, in Holland. Just a few weeks later he earned the Distinguished Conduct Medal for extreme bravery in the Hochwald Forest sector in Germany. The DCM is awarded for displays of magnificent courage and fighting spirit when faced with almost insuperable odds.

During World War II, only 162 Canadians were awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal and reportedly only nine have ever received both the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal.

In unique Canadian history, Charles Byce was not the only family member to demonstrate great valour. His father, Henry Byce, also received both medals in World War I—a father and son each receiving awards across two world wars.

The unveiling will be this Saturday in Chapleau at 1:30. Hope to see you all there.

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario's Family Forum as they celebrate their 25th anniversary this September.

The Family Forum is believed to be one of the longest-standing patient and hospital advisory committees in the world. It includes families from many different backgrounds with diverse diagnoses and experiences that provide advice and guidance from a patient

and family perspective to CHEO's administration, staff and health care professionals.

Many improvements and initiatives that they have helped develop are still part of patient and family life at CHEO. These include library resources for parents and children, family lounges where tired parents can relax, shower, make a phone call or do laundry, and the opportunity for a parent to stay with a child going into surgery until they fall asleep under anaesthesia.

Like many families in Ottawa, Linda and I and our children—and now our grandchildren—have benefited from the work of the Family Forum. On behalf of our family and all families in eastern Ontario, a special thank you to all members past and present. Your efforts have made and continue to make a big difference for all families served by CHEO.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise to speak about the hospital merger in Durham region. The Scarborough/West Durham expert panel's recommended merger of Lakeridge Health and Ajax-Pickering hospital has created a host of reactions, mostly quite negative.

While a merger to keep all Durham hospitals under one health care umbrella is good in theory, it's apparent that very little planning for the financial fallout has occurred. In fact, Speaker, a wide disparity exists between the costs and the savings of the hospital merger. The cost of the Durham merger is approximately \$18 million, a capital expenditure that will result in an anticipated \$300,000 in annual savings.

1310

Does this merger benefit the patient? Will the residents of Durham region have better access to health care that they deserve? The answer is no.

There's going to be financial pain now for some potential relief when the province gets around to building a new hospital in Durham. At the end of the day, there are no indications that the merger will provide better patient experience and access to care that they deserve.

RIDING OF ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Because of the extraordinary work from the MPP for Etobicoke North, I wanted to share with the House \$1.7 billion of development money that is coming to this great riding. This is distributed, in this tranche, in three areas: for the hospital, for transportation and, of course, for the college.

We have a \$90-million facility at Humber College, an extraordinarily beautiful student facility. I invite you to tour it.

We have eight new stops coming on the Finch LRT, from Etobicoke North: Humber College, Highway 27, Westmore, Martin Grove, Albion, Stevenson, Kipling, Islington—Pearldale, Duncanwoods, Milvan, Weston and so on.

On top of that, I'm most proud, perhaps, being a physician, to share with the House the \$358-million commitment that we've made to Etobicoke General, which will not only quadruple its footprint in the riding, but will lead to a larger, state-of-the-art emergency department, critical care and intensive care units, cardio-respiratory units, a maternal newborn unit, a specialized nursery, neurodiagnostic services and a whole lot more.

Etobicoke North, as you can see with these developments in the hospital sector, transportation sector and college sector, is on the move. I'd like to thank my staff, in particular, for helping to orchestrate these many, many developments.

THORNHILL VILLAGE FESTIVAL

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so excited. This weekend, it is once again the Thornhill Village Festival. I hope you're all going to come out and celebrate with us. It's a beautiful area. We've got a nice historic district. In fact, the society for the preservation of the historic district of Thornhill—they have a website, thornhillhistoric.org—there are about 20 volunteers who organize the festival every year. This is the 40th anniversary of the festival. They operate with very little in grants. They make a lot of money from the booths that people rent.

I'll be having a booth there, so I hope people will come visit. I'll be walking over with my friends Esther and Harold. We're going to be there with Peter Kent, the MP for Thornhill, as well.

There's going to be music, the King's Royal Yorkers, a tea ceremony, children's activities, a petting zoo, a magic show—last year, the show Frozen had fantastic singers—a beer garden. The festival is Saturday and Sunday. Sunday is really the music festival, and the beer garden is going to be there. I want to remind everybody that beer is kosher, so you don't have to worry about that in Thornhill. It's a bit of a contentious issue. I'm going to mention that because on Saturday people are observing the Sabbath, but they still often come out, walk around the festival, join in all the celebrations and see all their friends and neighbours.

We're predicting some great weather and some big smiles, lots of kids and lots of pets.

Thanks for coming out.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO REBATE FOR ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA REMISE DE L'ONTARIO POUR

LES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr. Thibeault moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity /
Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I will be making my remarks during ministerial statements.

DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES PROHIBITION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 INTERDISANT LA VENTE DE PORTE-À-PORTE

Mr. Baker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to prohibit door-to-door sales of certain products /
Projet de loi 14, Loi interdisant la vente de porte-à-porte de certains produits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This bill would protect consumers from misleading, aggressive and coercive sales tactics from door-to-door salespeople. If passed, the bill will ban the sale, lease or rent of air conditioners, water heaters, furnaces and water treatment devices. It would also allow the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to add more products to the list, if necessary. Significant fines would be instituted on those individuals and companies contravening the act.

HELPING VOLUNTEERS GIVE BACK ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 VISANT À AIDER LES BÉNÉVOLES À CONTRIBUER

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers /
Projet de loi 15, Loi concernant les vérifications du casier judiciaire des bénévoles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As a result of prorogation, this is a reintroduction of a bill that I've actually introduced six times. It would essentially allow people who wish to volunteer for multiple organizations to do so with the same criminal record check.

HAZEL McCALLION DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE HAZEL McCALLION

Mrs. Mangat moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Hazel McCallion Day /
Projet de loi 16, Loi proclamant le Jour de Hazel
McCallion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This bill would acknowledge Hazel McCallion's lifetime of contributions to her community by declaring February 14 in each year as Hazel McCallion Day in Ontario. Given the length of her public service career, including 36 years as mayor of the city of Mississauga, and her ongoing volunteerism for local and international causes, it would be appropriate to acknowledge her legacy and her example by naming a day in her honour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introduction of bills? Last call for introduction of bills.

Motions? The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I rise to seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice to immediately vote on Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy is seeking to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HYDRO RATES

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I rise today to introduce the proposed Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016. If passed, this act would provide electricity relief to about five million eligible residential consumers, small businesses and farms all across Ontario.

When our government came to power in 2003, we committed to providing a safe, clean and reliable energy supply to Ontario's homes and families, and indeed, over the last 13 years, we've been transforming and modernizing our system. We have left coal behind, and our actions have decreased electricity sector emissions by approximately 80%. That means a healthier environment and better health for Ontarians.

We replaced coal with a cleaner supply. In 2015, Ontario's electricity generation was over 90% emissions-free. Also, Ontario has enhanced and renewed its transmission and distribution systems, giving us a smart grid that is future-ready. We're proud of that record. But along with our commitments to safe, clean and reliable electricity, we also committed to an affordable supply, and I want to assure this House that we have not lost sight of that commitment.

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I think it's important to note that according to the Financial Accountability Officer, families in Ontario

spend less money on electricity on average than in every province except British Columbia, and that total home energy costs are in the middle of the pack when compared to other Canadian provinces. The government has used virtually all available public policy levers at our disposal to mitigate rate pressure for customers before they become costs that need to be recovered via Ontario's electricity customers.

Since 2013, a number of actions have been taken to reduce overall electricity system costs, including:

- renegotiating the green energy investment agreement, reducing contract costs by \$3.7 billion;

- deferring the construction of two new nuclear reactors at Ontario Power Generation's Darlington facility, avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction costs;

- approving Ontario Power Generation's plans to enable the ongoing operation of Pickering up to 2024, which is expected to save ratepayers as much as \$600 million;

- reducing feed-in-tariff prices through annual price reviews, saving ratepayers at least \$1.9 billion, relative to the 2013 long-term energy plan forecast; and

- removing an expected \$3.3 billion in large renewable procurement costs that are relative to the 2013 long-term energy plan forecast, based on the results of the first phase of the LRP.

But our government recognizes that the changes we have made have come at a cost to Ontario's residential and business customers. That's why our government has put in place price mitigation measures to help consumers manage their electricity costs. For example, at the start of this year, we removed the debt retirement charge from residential bills, and in January, we launched the Ontario Electricity Support Program—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about the clean energy benefit?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm loath to do this. This is not normal and it's not acceptable. You have a rebuttal provided for you in time. This is not acceptable. It stops.

Finish your statement, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: In January, we launched the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which provides ongoing monthly bill payment support to low-income households. Our government recognizes that we need to do more to ensure an affordable energy system for all Ontarians. That's why today, I am proud to introduce legislation that would benefit ratepayers in a lasting, meaningful way.

The proposed Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016, would provide an 8% rebate for consumers eligible for the regulated price plan. If passed, the legislation would take effect on January 1, 2017. That's less than four months from now; that's an aggressive timeline. What's more, this proposed legislation is one part of a package of reforms that would provide benefits to all Ontario electricity consumers.

For rural customers, who have been especially affected by increasing electricity distribution costs, we are updating the rural or remote rate protection plan, providing an additional \$110 million in support. This represents significant rate relief for approximately 330,000 eligible rural electricity customers.

For businesses, we will be lowering the threshold for participating in the industrial conservation initiative from three megawatts to one megawatt. This would give more businesses the opportunity to significantly reduce their electricity costs by reducing their consumption during peak hours, thereby deferring the need for costly new peaking generation.

Finally, as outlined in the 2016 budget, the government intends to recycle a portion of the cap-and-trade auction proceeds to offset the impact of cap-and-trade on industrial and commercial consumers to keep rates affordable.

Taken together, the legislation we are introducing today, along with these other measures, forms a comprehensive package that would provide electricity rate relief to all Ontario electricity consumers.

Ontario's investments are securing a clean supply of electricity, a grid that's ready for the future and a healthier environment for ourselves and for our children. The legislation we are introducing today, along with our other reforms, would ensure electricity is affordable for homes, farms, and businesses across Ontario as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Energy today, to his ministerial statement. He conveniently omits the information he doesn't want people to hear and talks about the story, the spinning, the talking points that the Liberals want people to hear.

He talks about this 8% rebate, which they were absolutely opposed to, and the minister only weeks ago said there is no crisis in the energy system, everything is just fine, there is nothing we need to do, we're on track. All of a sudden, they lose a by-election in Scarborough-Rouge River and they're pressed into action on the energy file because that's what people were hearing, that's what we were hearing, that's what they were hearing at the doors. It resulted in a stunning defeat for the Liberal Party in a riding that they'd never lost.

Since last May, this government has instituted changes that result in an average home paying \$255 more for electricity, and now they bring in a program that they say is going to save them, which amounts to 36 cents a day. I daresay that you might be able to get a can of No Name tomato soup if it's on sale for 36 cents, but I don't think that's going to keep the people who have been visiting food banks away from the food bank in my riding because they cannot pay their hydro bills.

So I say to the minister, as my leader said so clearly on Tuesday in his response to the throne speech: That is too little, too late. For coming to this conclusion, basically under duress, because the electorate has told you in no uncertain terms that you people have failed them here

in Ontario over the last many years in the electricity system, I'm going to cut the new minister a little bit of slack because he is new to the job. But he should know what has gone on here, particularly since 2009 and the introduction of the Green Energy Act.

They like to talk about all this investment in transmission. As the Auditor General said in a report, and it was confirmed by the C.D. Howe Institute just recently, 70% of the increased costs to the electricity consumer in this province are as a result of generation decisions. Not transmission or distribution—generation. So the decisions you people made in generation are what led to the increases in electricity costs.

The contracts that you signed, the contracts that are so exorbitant that you actually bragged in the throne speech about renegotiating some of them—did you ever think of maybe just negotiating them properly in the first place for true value for the products that you are receiving, the electricity that people are generating? No. They signed contracts at the highest prices across the world. Now the people in Ontario are paying for that.

On renewables alone, the Auditor General said it was \$9.2 billion more than we should have paid. Now, late coming to the party and you think the people of—and it's not being received well. It's not being received well at all, because here they are, coming to the party now and saying, "Look at us, we care. We're the compassionate Liberals. Here's an 8% rebate on your electricity bill." It's too little, too late.

In fact, on November 1—and the minister knows—there will be an additional charge on those same people's energy bills. That's going to come before the rebate even comes into effect.

In the little time I have left, I do want to scold the minister a little bit. I said I want to cut him some slack, but the minister has been going around the province, as has the Premier. I read an article that he was in Sudbury there, his home constituency, and talking about the blackout of 2003 and clearly implying that the blackout had something to do with the failure in the electricity system here in the province of Ontario and it was the fault of the previous government.

This is the front page of a 238-page report, and I would encourage the minister, now that it is his job as Minister of Energy, to read the report. It states, in no uncertain terms, in its conclusions, that that blackout was a result of a failure in a switching station in the state of Ohio, and that it cascaded not just through Ontario, but the entire northeastern United States.

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Over 40 million people were without power as a result of that. So if you're going to talk about the electricity system, you have to be accurate. You have to make sure the people are getting the facts. In fact, now changes have been made all across Ontario and the northeastern United States so that this cascading effect can't happen again should there be similar failures. The minister has a responsibility, when he is speaking to the people of the province of Ontario about our electricity system, to stick to the truth and stick to the facts.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me.

I can't actually say it is a pleasure to talk to this matter, because one always fails when one understates the cynicism with which this government approaches the electricity file. It is staggering to me. It is astounding to me.

I have listened to the minister's presentation. I have had a chance to skim over the documentation. Speaker, why are we discussing this today? Why is this on the agenda? Because Mr. Cho here won a by-election in a riding that the Liberals thought was their property. They thought it was their property and, my God, they finally realized they had a problem on their hands.

My colleague here, Cheri DiNovo, back in 2007 was championing the fight for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage. She was making good ground, but what really set off her campaign like a rocket was when this government lost a by-election in York South–Weston. By God, Speaker, very shortly thereafter we had a resolution to move the minimum wage to 10 bucks, because this government understands only one thing. It deals in only one currency, and that is the loss of seats or the winning of seats. When they lost York South–Weston, we got an increase in the minimum wage. They lost Scarborough–Rouge River, now they're talking about hydro prices. That's it. That is the totality of their concern for the people of Ontario.

I had, for the sins I have committed in my life, the opportunity to sit on the committee inquiring into the gas plant scandal. I had the opportunity to read many an email written by many a Liberal staffer, except for that large volume that were destroyed, deliberately and against the law—another matter, another matter.

Two power plants were being built, in areas where the demand for power was dropping, contributing to power surplus in Ontario. Those plants, which were cancelled on the eves of elections in order to ensure that four seats would be saved, are now being rebuilt because of the deep love this government has for TransCanada pipelines and any private power developer that they can find—plants, Speaker, that are adding to the surplus of power production in Ontario.

If you look at the latest report put out by the Independent Electricity System Operator, power costs have gone up 40% in the last decade. Why? Demand has been dropping. We have too much production. Two more gas plants are coming on stream in the next few years to produce power we do not need, and yet this government continues to do things like offer to pay garbage-burning incinerators for any power they produce. Do we need that power? Do we need to burn garbage? Don't we have a circular economy act?

No, Speaker. Somebody has got to make a buck. Some Liberal friend has got to get rich and they, they will be given a purse full of money for that garbage they burn. Non-utility generators, gas-fired power plants set up back in the 1980s and 1990s, are having their contracts renewed. Why? Why, when we have a power surplus, and when we have a climate crisis, something this govern-

ment cites? Why are we renewing contracts for gas-fired power plants that add to people's bills?

Speaker, there is no bottom. There is no depth to which this government will not descend to make sure their friends are happy, to make sure that Ontarians have difficulty living their lives. They will not stop.

The minister talks about the reliability of the system. In December 2013, I was walking around my riding and people were stranded at the top of high-rises because the power system had failed even though this government had known for almost 20 years—20 years—that ice storms were a threat to the reliability of the system. Had they done their work? No.

In July of that year, power failed in the west end of Toronto. Why? A transformer station owned by Hydro One was flooded out. Did this government know that climate change was going to affect the reliability of the power system? Well, from everything they said, you would think they would have.

Speaker, I only have a few seconds left. I look forward to debating this bill because I really want to go through some of the more outrageous things this government has done on power. This may be useful to a number of people. I agree with Mr. Yakabuski: It is a small measure, maybe useful to a few people. But in the end we cannot deal with the reliability and affordability of electricity in this province as long as it's privatizing. Government feeds at the trough and undermines the economy and the social fabric of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

It's now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to thank the thousands of people who have responded. It's an exclamation point behind the energy crisis that we have today. In fact, our website crashed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Read the petition, please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt

hour to date in 2016, yet the Liberal government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this Liberal government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Makayla.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank Mrs. Tanya Giles—one individual—from Manitoulin Island for taking the time collecting all these 1,700 signatures. The petition reads:

"Hydro One Petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of citizens from northern Ontario oppose the sale of Hydro One;

"Whereas the majority of citizens of northern Ontario oppose the rate increase which is the direct result of successful initiative to conserve and reduce electrical power consumption;

"Whereas the majority of citizens of northern Ontario oppose the installation and continued use of the smart meter program due to the unreliability of their metering and billing as well as incidents of causing fire;

"Whereas the majority of citizens from northern Ontario oppose the current inclusion of the delivery fee charges on power bills due to the unfair and confusing policies.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call upon the Liberal government to stop the sell-off and privatization of Hydro One, stop further rate increases caused resulting from lower-than-expected consumption, stop the practice of billing rural customers for line loss charges, and reverse the ill-conceived

decision to install smart meters without passing on the expense for replacing equipment to customers."

I wholeheartedly agree with Tanya Giles and the 1,700 signatures that are on this petition.

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HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is a petition to lower hydro rates.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion, according to the Auditor General, on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills; and

"Whereas with the removal of the Clean Energy Benefit and the increase in energy rates starting in May 2015 will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$205 per year; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Om to take to the table.

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, draw the attention of the Ontario Legislature to the following:

"That climate change is the most urgent issue threatening our children's and our planet's future;

"That agriculture is currently responsible for an estimated 25%-30% of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions;

"That regenerative agriculture has the potential, through healthy soil management and related practices, to offset 5%-15% of global emissions from fossil fuels;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the government of Ontario to:

"(1) include regenerative agriculture as a key contributor to Ontario's official greenhouse gas reduction targets;

"(2) develop reduction targets through incentives and regulatory policies that ensure Ontario's agricultural lands become a significant carbon-capturing sink."

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign this and give this to page Sophia.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office;

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment;

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss;

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the Liberal government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount;

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating;

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this Liberal government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I'm happy to affix my signature and give it to page Tori.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition, "Hydro One Not for Sale!"

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I agree, Speaker. I'll sign my name and give it to Gideon to bring up to the front.

GO TRANSIT

M. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai l'honneur de présenter une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area surrounding Park Lawn Road and Lake Shore Boulevard has experienced rapid residential development in the last decade;

"Whereas the area has approximately 28,000 residents currently living in the area;

"Whereas the estimated potential population from current development applications will increase the area's population to approximately 40,000 new residents;

"Whereas in 2013 the Toronto Board of Trade estimated that traffic congestion costs Toronto's economy \$6 billion a year;

"Whereas there is critical demand for public transit for this part of Etobicoke. Currently, public transit services are consistently congested, inefficient and at times unreliable;

"Whereas a new GO train station at Park Lawn Road would assist with relieving congestion and pressures on overburdened transportation infrastructure by providing easily accessible rapid transit for thousands of area residents from Humber Bay Shores, Mimico and the south Etobicoke communities;

"Whereas an additional new GO train station at Park Lawn would also be aligned with the province's stated policies to improve quality through the reduction of traffic on provincial highways by the provision of mass transit;

"Whereas for the aforementioned reasons we, the undersigned citizens, petition the Metrolinx organization

to approve an additional new GO train station in the vicinity of Park Lawn Road and Lake Shore Boulevard.”

I support, sign and send it to you via page Zoe.

HIGHWAY RAMPS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m pleased to present this petition on behalf of the residents of York–Simcoe.

“Whereas the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury will continue to have robust growth of population and commercial activity in proximity to the Holland Marsh, Ontario’s salad bowl, which consists of 7,000 acres of specialty crop area lands designated in the provincial Greenbelt Plan and is situated along the municipal boundary between King township and the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, as bisected by Highway 400;

“Whereas the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400 provide critical access for farm operations within the Holland Marsh allowing for efficient transport of product to market, delivery of materials and equipment and patronage of on-farm commercial activities; and

“Whereas the loss of that critical access to Highway 400 may threaten the significant financial benefits that the Holland Marsh contributes to the Ontario economy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the council of the corporation of the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury hereby advises the Honourable Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation, that the town does not support the elimination of the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400, and further, that the town requests that the duration of the temporary closure of Canal Road between Wist Road and Davis Road be minimized to the greatest extent possible during the Highway 400/North Canal bridge replacement project.”

As I am in agreement, I have given my signature and am giving it to page Paul.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have another petition this afternoon on the high price of electricity.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

“Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can’t afford to pay more;

“Whereas Ontario’s businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas the recent Auditor General’s report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

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“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven’t met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

“Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government’s current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills.”

Madam Speaker, I support this petition and I affix my signature to it, as well.

HIGHWAY RAMPS

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Whereas the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury will continue to have robust growth of population and commercial activity in proximity to the Holland Marsh, Ontario’s salad bowl, which consists of 7,000 acres of specialty crop area lands designated in the provincial Greenbelt Plan and is situated along the municipal boundary between King township and the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, as bisected by Highway 400;

“Whereas the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400 provide critical access for farm operations within the Holland Marsh allowing for efficient transport of product to market, delivery of materials and equipment and patronage of on-farm commercial activities; and

“Whereas the loss of that critical access to Highway 400 may threaten the significant financial benefits that the Holland Marsh contributes to the Ontario economy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the council of the corporation of the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury hereby advises the Honourable Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation, that the town does not support the elimination of the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400, and further, that the town requests that the duration of the temporary closure of Canal Road between Wist Road and Davis Road be minimized to the greatest extent possible during the Highway 400/North Canal bridge replacement project.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Sophia.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time for petitions is now over.

ESTIMATES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that, in accordance with the order of the House dated September 13, 2016, with respect to the

estimates which were tabled earlier today, the following applies: The estimates of the following ministries and offices are referred to and deemed selected for consideration—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Dispense? I heard a dispense. Dispensed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 15, 2016, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, we are speaking about the throne speech today. I would have thought the benches would have been full of robust chest-thumping today on the government's throne speech, but obviously that's probably not an accurate description of the government benches today.

Yesterday, while I was questioning the Premier on the cash-for-access that has been plaguing her government and scandalizing politics in this province for some time now, I used the term "lubricious." If you look up "lubricious" in a dictionary, it means smooth and slippery and oily. I think that's a good word to use when we're talking about this throne speech, and also when we're speaking about Liberal politics and policy in general—lubricious.

We just heard from the Minister of Energy. He introduced a bill that flows out of the throne speech. This bill will reduce electricity rates by approximately 38 cents a day for the average Ontario electricity user.

It follows very much in the same vein as his predecessor, the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, when he was Minister of Energy. They used to always trumpet and thump their chests that Ontario had and does have competitive electricity rates. Of course, that's an entirely lubricious statement, because when you look at electricity rates in this province and compare them to other provinces, you will see that Ontario is the only jurisdiction in this country that has a delivery charge—the only province. No other province in Canada has a delivery charge on their electricity; we do. Every other province has a monthly administrative fee, just as we do. Mostly monthly administrative fees range between \$12 and \$25. In Manitoba, their basic administrative fee is \$7.57; in Saskatchewan, it's \$29; in Quebec, it's \$12. I can go on: New Brunswick, \$22. Not one of any of the other provinces has a delivery rate.

Our monthly administration charge here with Hydro One is \$24.07. But then we also have a line-loss charge that no other province has. Then we have the delivery charge, which on an average home in Ontario, a residen-

tial, rural home in Ontario, will be \$82.66 on top of the line-loss charge, on top of the monthly administration charge, and then, finally, on top of the electricity charge.

Let me put this here. This is available on my website. It's called Hydro Facts. I did a comparison between every province in this country for a rural homeowner using 1,000 kilowatts of electricity per month. The electricity charge in Ontario for that typical home would be \$52.20—very competitive. However, the total bill for that same house, which uses \$52.20 worth of electricity, is \$239.23 when you add in all the other charges.

I would have hoped our new minister would not have resorted and reverted to the same tactics as the previous minister of facts of omission. A devious way of addressing people in this province is when you purposely omit relevant facts in the discussion and the argument. It's purposeful when you don't fully describe the context. Now, Speaker, I'll also say this: We can also see—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I just want to remind the member—I know he's very passionate about this issue—to be very careful with his choice of language and words. He's very close, okay? I just want to warn him.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I always like to be close to the line, Speaker, so thank you very much.

Don't just take the facts of cost. Let's look at the facts of consequence. In this province right now, nearly 600,000 people—homes and businesses—are in arrears on their electricity bill. That's nearly 600,000—567,000. In rural Ontario, the place where I represent, where Hydro One is the only provider of electricity, a staggering 300,000 homes in rural Ontario can't pay their electricity bill. That's out of 1.3 million Hydro One ratepayers. Over 20%, one in five households and businesses in rural Ontario, are in arrears.

1400

That's a staggering number. When I go down my concession road or go down the road in Perth or Carleton Place and look at the people I know who live in these homes, I say, "One in five can't pay their hydro bill. They're in arrears."

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's bad in urban Ontario as well, but these delivery charges, these line-loss charges, these administration charges, are disproportionately hurting rural Ontario. We have about 8% of urban Ontario who can't pay their electricity bills, but 20% in rural Ontario.

Madam Speaker, we have a crisis. We have, and we have had a problem for some time. This year alone, so far we have 60,000 homes who have had their electricity cut off, disconnected because they had no way, even going to social services to get money for their hydro bill, or Ontario Works, or wherever they could to get money to pay their bill. They still couldn't pay the bill, and Hydro disconnected their power.

This is a travesty, when in Ontario, where we had the highest standard of living in the country, one in five people now can't afford electricity. How else can we describe this?

I watched that movie the other day about the financial bust in 2008, about asset-backed securities. There was an interesting figure in there. As people were seeing this trend line develop, this problem happening with asset-backed securities, with mortgages, they were saying, "As long as our default rate doesn't go more than 4%, we can handle this; the banks can handle it. But if we go over 4%, and if we get up to 8% of defaults, the whole system will collapse." And of course, that's what happened.

But here in rural Ontario, we're already at a 20% default on our electricity, and 38 cents a day is not going to help those 60,000 people who have had their electricity cut off. It won't help them. What are we going to do as a society when one in five of our friends, one in five of our neighbours, one in five of our businesses are energy bankrupt? They don't have electricity. What are we going to do? I know a 38-cent-a-day rebate is not going to bring much comfort in the cold of winter for people who have no electricity, no lights, no heat.

But I do want this new minister and this Liberal Party to come clean with the people of Ontario. I want them to speak honestly. I want them to put down their spin, because we know that spin is that omission of fact. Spin is only putting forward the narrative that you want, and leaving pertinent, relevant facts aside.

I want the new Minister of Energy to stand up and say, "Yes, we were not completely truthful when we said electricity rates are competitive," because they failed to articulate and enunciate to the people of Ontario the delivery charges, the line loss charges and the administration charges. We have a duty. We all have a duty in this House to put forth all relevant facts, not just the ones that might make us look better than we really are. That's what the Minister of Energy is continuing to do.

Speaker, I've got these hydro facts. I'm going to send them down to the table. I'm going to make them available to any member in this House. If you want to scrutinize them, if you want to examine them, evaluate them, be happy to. But those are what people are paying, and we are paying more than anywhere else in this country.

I also want to mention—about the throne speech, as well—that electricity was included in the throne speech, but I also want to say that the Premier stated that we need to prorogue Parliament and bring in the throne speech. She needed to reset the legislative agenda of this House. I take her at her word. Let's say that's absolutely truthful, but then the very first bill, and every bill since then, has been a reintroduction of previous government legislation; right? How can you reset your legislative agenda by introducing the same legislation that you just killed on the order paper with prorogation? How can that be? The facts are inconsistent with the words. If there is a truthful reset of the legislative agenda, then let's see some new legislation, right?

Everybody else in this House today—we've seen people reintroducing their private member's bills: "I have to reintroduce this because of prorogation." All those bills were killed. Bills that had been studied at committee

in second reading are now back to square one. Bills that have gone through the process have gone back to square one.

What is really at the heart of the prorogation was not a reset of the agenda. I think what was at the heart of the prorogation was the loss in Scarborough–Rouge River to our PC colleague Raymond Cho. Now I understand it's going to be renamed Scarborough–Blue River in honour of Raymond Cho's efforts in that neighbourhood. For a long time, it will be represented now with honesty, conviction and truthfulness, and we will hear strong, strong representation by Raymond Cho. But Speaker—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Could we please have some order? I hear the concern about some of the language. I remind the member opposite that we have to be careful about the choice of language. Okay? I also want to remind the government side that the member does have this time. We have to be respectful of each other. We had done this this morning. I'd just remind everybody.

1410

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm surprised that when I speak of a member who will represent their constituency with honesty and conviction, it raises the cackles and the catcalls from the other side. I think that's what we all want our colleagues to do at all times, so I'm not sure why the howls from the other side when I speak highly of our colleagues in this House.

However, Speaker, what was clear in this throne speech—when we see nearly 600,000 people who can't pay their hydro bill and the minister and the Premier say, "Not a big deal," when the Auditor General says we've spent \$37 billion over market price for our electricity and the Premier says, "Not a big deal. No crisis," and when 60,000 people have their power cut off and, "Not a big deal, not a problem," it's clear and evident to me that there is never a problem for this Liberal Party unless the people of Ontario make our problems their problems. That's what happened in Scarborough–Rouge River. The people of Scarborough–Rouge River and Raymond Cho made their problem the Liberal problem, and we got prorogation as a consequence of it. So thank you very much for the hard work, and I look forward to strong representation in Scarborough–Rouge River from my colleague.

But I do think it's time that the problems of the people in Ontario are not left just to the result of a by-election; that this government makes a strong, resolute commitment to the people of Ontario that they are going to stand up and they are going to represent their interests with conviction, that they will get our hydro prices back in line, and also that we'll get out of this scandalous cash-for-access mess that the government has been embroiled in over the last year of ministers having huge fundraisers with their stakeholders, the people that government does business with. Discussions and conversations that everyday people can't have with government are being undertaken by those who can afford to go to government fundraisers, people who can afford to drop 10,000 bucks

to go on a fishing trip or to go to a wine-and-dine cocktail event.

That is not the democracy that anybody on this side of the House can tolerate or accept. That's what ought to have been in the throne speech: a new, clear direction for this province of honesty and conviction.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to follow the comments just made by the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Just before I get into what he was talking about on the electricity grid, I believe he does like to walk a fine line, one time, maybe like Johnny Cash; I don't know. I don't think he meant to impugn the reputation of the former member from Scarborough-Rouge River when he was talking about the new member having integrity and that he will represent the riding well. So just let me say that, because we all know the former member and I believe we all have respect for him.

The member did say that the cost of a kilowatt hour versus the total bill—I think that is a very salient point that we haven't talked about very much in this House at all. It is one thing for the Wynne government to stand up and say our rates are even—we're not the highest in North America or whatever it is. That's the rate for the kilowatt hour. But when you take the total distribution cost from the time it's generated to the time it's delivered to you—there's a fee for stuff that's lost on the way; it gets to your house, and then the taxes are added on—that's a different number. That puts us a lot higher than what the Wynne government was leading the people of Ontario to believe, just on the costs of the kilowatt hour.

So I commend the member for bringing that to our attention this afternoon. I think we should all take that into account when we go back to our ridings and people say, "But the Wynne government says we're not paying very much at all." Yeah? Guess what? That's the kilowatt hour. That's not the total distribution cost, and on your total bill—hey, that tax should never have been there. It's a Liberal tax. Tell your federal cousins to take it off as well, and we'll all live a lot longer and a lot better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Of course, I'll speak about the electricity issues here, but I must, at the outset, respond to my honourable colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. When you referred to the former member of Scarborough-Rouge River, the honourable Bas Balkissoon, saying that he is now—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I never referred to the former member, and anyone who thinks I did—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, I hear a point of order. Order. Order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: —is a total falsehood.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Please sit down when I'm standing, okay? You know the rules. When I'm standing, everybody sits.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I never mentioned the former member—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. You have to withdraw. The member has to withdraw. Lanark-Frontenac-Addington, you need to withdraw your comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Which comments?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): You need to withdraw your comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I said that I never mentioned the former member—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, you're being instructed to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm not sure what I can withdraw, other than the statement that I never referred to the former member.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): You need to withdraw.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. If my reading of this is incorrect, I will apologize in advance to the member. But our understanding on this side is you said that now, with the newly elected member for Scarborough-Rouge River, the honourable Raymond Cho—we respectfully welcome you—you did, I believe, say something to the effect that now the riding can be represented honestly. I'll be happy to have my remarks cross-checked through Hansard.

I think that particularly on a day when we saluted the honourable Tim Hudak, with 21 years of service, and perhaps a gentleman who exemplified the best of this place, that remark was probably uncalled for. We all know that Bas Balkissoon—similar, by the way, to Raymond Cho—served his city at the city level, municipal level, and now with distinction and honour in this chamber.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? Okay, I see two. I want to recognize the member from Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm proud to stand up and respond to the 20-minute speech made by my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

I think that when my colleague was talking about the famous reset that we were surprised to hear about on Friday afternoon of last week, and then to have every single legislation introduced be reintroduced by the Liberal government, it speaks to what they actually meant by "reset." I personally had to reintroduce two private members' bills.

But I think it really speaks to a messaging track that went desperately off-track. To suggest that you were going to do a reset on Friday afternoon, only to have, starting Monday, reintroduction after reintroduction of the same tired pieces of legislation that we were debating and discussing last fall, speaks to a government that is bereft of new ideas.

I think that there was a wonderful opportunity where you could have brought legislation that was updated, improved, and actually changed paths, changed directions, which is ultimately what prorogation is supposed to do. Instead, what we have seen, of course, all this week is rehashing the same old same old.

I'm really pleased that my colleague raised that, because you can see that in the editorials that we've seen and read all this week. Where is the reset? We haven't seen it. It's simply rehashing what has already been debated. The fact that we are saying we haven't lost any legislative days—in fact, we have, because we're talking about the same thing over and over again that we've already debated and discussed. I think it was a real missed opportunity.

1420

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to be able to stand in this House. This is the first opportunity I've had to stand since we've been back after the famous prorogation. It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. We don't always agree, but you always have to listen to the member, because it's not a canned speech. It's not speaking notes; he speaks what he believes. Sometimes he skates too close to the line.

But on the hydro rate issue, I think everyone in rural Ontario is getting close to the point of skating over the line, because our constituents, the people we deal with every day, don't have a choice of whether to skate too close to the line or say the wrong thing. Their hydro is being cut. I remember when we first started bringing it up—both the Tories and us—about people having to make a choice between heating and eating. On the other side, they scoffed at that: “Oh, yeah, another one of those lines.”

I have people in my riding who I'm going to talk about 20 minutes later who actually can't pay their hydro bill. We got them help to get their backlog fixed, and they told me, “John, we've got no choice, we can't pay. Even when we catch up, the next one we can't pay. We're going to leave it cut off.”

We're going back 100 years because Sir Adam Beck—you know, “Power for the people”—is gone. Ordinary people in the country are no longer being able to pay for hydro.

As far as this channel change, when I'm sitting and watching this throne speech, this message, this thing flashed before my eyes. It was Premier Wynne in a phone booth coming out in a cape: Kathleen Wynne, hydro price fighter. In northern Ontario we still have phone booths, because we don't have cellphone coverage—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: There's only one thing I want to convey in these two minutes: an unreserved apology for

any slight on the former member Bas Balkissoon. I have a great respect for Bas Balkissoon, and I had no intention of saying anything untoward about the former member. So I'll check Hansard, and if my words were not consistent with that, I'll correct it. But I do want to assure all members of the House that there was no slight or anything else intended for the former member.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I corrected that from this morning, so there we go.

Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak today. It's always a privilege to speak on behalf of the residents of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'm happy to speak to the throne speech and some of the recent announcements of this government.

There's so much more that could have been done for the people of Niagara. There are so many things the people of Niagara have asked this government for that could have been addressed. Unfortunately, every single time the government made an announcement, it lacked detail and lacked any firm commitment to real action that would help the people of the Niagara region and anywhere in the province. Anyone watching these recent speeches realizes a number of these decisions and commitments are designed to kick in after 2018.

Madam Speaker, let me give you some examples of what I'm talking about. Let me tell you about the expansion of GO train service all the way to Niagara Falls, including other municipalities like St. Catharines and Grimsby. This is a project that we know is going to create good local jobs in an area that has high unemployment. It's going to create 2,400 full-time jobs for the construction work that needs to be done in order to make it happen. It's going to create 1,000 full-time jobs to do upkeep and run the system. It's ready to go. These are jobs that could put local tradespeople to work.

I spoke with the tradespeople in my riding. Take the electricians, for example. They are incredibly dedicated, and I know that they're some of the best workers in the province. When they are hired by a local company, these businesses know they're hiring the most skilled electricians money can buy. They also know that they're going to deliver a finished product that is reliable and built to last. We can put these incredible workers to work with a project like GO. It's a project that's going to create millions of dollars in economic benefits to the Niagara region through spinoff jobs, increased tourism—a boost to our incredible tourism sector. It's good for workers. It's good for employers.

Sounds like a good project, right? Sounds like a no-brainer, right? Well, unfortunately, the Liberal government doesn't seem to understand that. Instead of announcing a firm timeline and a funding commitment this week, they have repeatedly announced that some time in the future the GO train is coming, but with very little detail. Right now, it's 2023, which is way too long for the benefits to the province of Ontario. The throne speech could have told the people of Niagara so many details about this project, yet there were none.

Madam Speaker, I can't stand up here again—I've done this four or five times already—without talking about the crisis in hydro, and I know you're hearing it. I respect the fact that some people are here. I hope that we finally see real action addressing the crisis in hydro and reduce the costs of hydro bills across the province by stopping the sale of Hydro One.

I hope that for the first time in at least the last 13 years the people of Ontario will find they have a government who listens to them, a government that listens to the concerns of seniors—seniors who are being forced to choose between medication or turning on their air conditioners in the summer months—and a government that would finally recognize that their disastrous sale of Hydro One needed to be stopped immediately to ensure the people of Niagara region and across the province of Ontario no longer have to see their hydro bills continue to skyrocket.

It is something that is seriously impacting our province. There are businesses in Niagara that had to move across the border because they couldn't afford the cost of hydro in Niagara. If the Liberal government would like to see some examples of that, I can get it to them. When they close down and they move to the States, they're taking the jobs with them. And why are they going to the States, just across the border? Because we're a border town. They're selling power cheaply to the United States when we need jobs in Niagara. Why are we allowing New York state to give their businesses cheap hydro when businesses here in Ontario are begging for the same thing? There is no way this government can sit down and figure out a way to get cheap power to Niagara and to our residents, rather than having it go across the border?

I'm sure they love to tell the Premier about how much cheap hydro produced in Niagara could benefit them. How can you expect to make a province a better place to live and raise your family when you can't allow businesses the opportunity they need to succeed, when you can't protect the good jobs those businesses provide for a community?

After more than 13 years of inaction on reducing hydro rates, it is long past that action needs to be taken—not four months from now, like you did this week. The time to act is now. Let's not forget that before the Liberal government started to do nothing to address the cost of hydro in this province 13 years ago, it was a Conservative government before them who tried to sell Hydro One in the first place. This is important. It was the PC Party that tried to sell Hydro One and they were only stopped by a lawsuit. They were stopped right in their tracks by a lawsuit brought forward by unions of this province who knew that what they were doing wasn't right.

And what happened this week? Now we've got a similar lawsuit going forward from our brothers and sisters at CUPE Ontario. I'm hopeful that that will have the same impact.

The NDP has been very clear. They don't want to sell Hydro One. We went across the province and spoke to

the residents of this province: 85% of the residents don't want to sell Hydro One. Municipality after municipality from every part of Ontario has said, "Don't sell Hydro One." The Liberals want to sell 60%. The PCs want to sell 49%. We want to keep it in the hands of the people of this province.

1430

I really want the government to listen here and understand what we members are seeing in our constituency offices. I can't believe that nobody on that side is having this. Over the summer, I asked residents to bring in their hydro bills and write a short letter to the minister explaining how hard times were becoming because people can't afford to pay their hydro bills. Well, a woman came into my office, a woman I didn't know and, quite frankly, I had never met before. She said to me, "Mr. Gates, I'm one of those residents who takes pride in paying my bills and paying them on time. I don't like getting a notice that I haven't paid my hydro bill." Then she broke down in tears in front of me and my staff. She broke down because no matter what she does, no matter how hard she works, she just can't keep up with the rising hydro bills.

I wish I could stand up here and say that's the only resident in my riding or in the province of Ontario who had that problem, as we've heard a number of times here by a number of people. In my riding alone—now, think about this—4,000 residents can't keep up with paying their hydro bill, in a province as rich in power as we have in Ontario.

I've already done this once so I'll do it relatively quickly, but I think it's important, because I don't want people to think that it's the MPP from Niagara Falls standing up telling a story. I want you to understand that this is coming from real residents of Ontario. This particular story is coming from the Port Colborne-Welland area, where they had a meeting. The OEB was present and the local power distributor was present. They had a meeting. They let them do their presentation for about 45 minutes. Then, unfortunately, it got out of hand.

Why did it get out of hand? There were about 150 people there. They were desperate. It wasn't about the \$1.50 that the local distributor wanted to raise on hydro; it was about their bill that is going up every single month, year after year, that they can't pay. At that same meeting, single moms, single dads—they were standing on chairs, throwing their bills and telling the OEB and the local provider, "Pay my bill," as they broke down in tears again.

Is that what we want in the province of Ontario? I'm asking you. When you do a reply to this, tell me if I'm wrong. What I want is to be able to live in Ontario, raise my children, get them a good education, maybe have enough money that I can put them in sporting events. I don't think that residents, whether you're a senior or a single mom or a family, should have to go to a meeting at night and break down in front of strangers because they can't pay a utility that we own, that we should always keep and should always own.

In Niagara—a little off the story, but if we go back to Sir Adam Beck, he would tell you that the reason why he wanted publicly funded hydro was to give us an advantage so we could create a clean environment, so we could create good-paying jobs across Ontario, and that's exactly what happened.

I'll talk a little bit more about hydro before I get on to a couple of other things. I did a member's statement a few days ago. I'm sure you guys were sitting by your TVs just waiting for it. I talked about hydro rates. I gave some examples on my Facebook on how they've gone up over the years. I asked the residents so I can take them to the minister. We put a petition up. It was up for 24 hours. You know, 100,000 people viewed that. Think about it: 100,000 people in 24 hours. We had 1,300 shares. All you guys know about Facebook. That's an incredible number. We had 1,000 comments, but we also had 2,000 people sign the petition in 24 hours. It is a crisis that has to be addressed.

I think I've got one more on hydro. But I'll save that for later in this, because it's going to talk about a workplace that we need to maintain, because I see my time goes quickly when I'm talking.

In the throne speech this week—and it may not flow quite as good as I like, but I'm going to read it here and then we'll go from there. Our Premier had the opportunity in the throne speech on Monday to make it easier for people in this province to get good jobs. I know the labour minister is here, and some of this will address him, so hopefully he can listen to me because I know he normally does.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He is.

Mr. Wayne Gates: She could have made a commitment to make it easier for people to join a union, just like we did on Labour Day this year.

She could have announced that she would make it easier for those looking for a first contract to get one. The labour minister knows, because I raised it in this House—like CarePartners, nurses in Windsor. On that day, we announced that we were committed to bringing back card-check certification for unions in the province of Ontario. We announced it because we know the unions make life better.

This is something that's interesting that a lot of people don't pay attention to, and it's not just for their members. Their benefits go further than that, wider than that. Having a strong union makes life better for everyone who works, and that's just a simple fact.

Again, I want this for the labour minister, and maybe he'll address it in the two minutes. I would like to tell you to go and ask your staff how being in a union has made their lives better for them. I would ask you that. But unfortunately, there's only one caucus in this building that has unionized staff. It's not the Liberals, it's not the PCs, despite their both claiming to be parties of labour these days. Imagine that: They claim to be friendly with labour and yet their own staff aren't in a union where they can get better wages, better pensions and better benefits that come with being a union with your fellow employees.

Madam Speaker, by reintroducing card-check certification to our province, we would help thousands of young workers make sure that they wouldn't be ripped off on their first job. We would help thousands of rural and northern Ontarians to ensure that they had more job security and weren't going to be forced to leave the province to find work. We would help ensure that if a first contract wasn't reached between an employer and a union, those hard-working Ontarians would have the right to arbitration.

We need card-check certification back in the province of Ontario and we need first-contract arbitration. All you need to do is look at Windsor—I mentioned CarePartners, which is in St. Catharines, my good friend Mr. Bradley's riding—at the nurses who spent more than two years, after they formed a union, trying to negotiate a contract with an employer who refused to do that. Instead of being able to go to arbitration, they were forced into a seven-month labour disruption in order to get what they deserved for their work.

To the labour minister, I think you agree with me, that's just not right. Now that is two missed opportunities for making good jobs in Ontario.

We won't have a \$15 minimum wage for more than a decade under this government's plans today.

Unfortunately, there's another opportunity to stand up for good jobs in Ontario that the Premier passed by in her throne speech on Monday. Madam Speaker, the Premier could have used her speech to signal that she would stand up with the NDP and our commitment to ensuring that we have a strong auto manufacturing sector in the province and in Canada. She could have told the thousands of people and workers in Oshawa, St. Catharines, CAMI in Ingersoll and around the province that she has their backs when it came to negotiations with the big automakers.

Once again, our Premier and her Liberal government chose to ignore that opportunity. Maybe she thinks auto manufacturing jobs aren't good jobs. She is happy that those good jobs are moving south of the border, because that's what's happening.

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I'm not okay with that. In the last 10 years, we have lost more than 300,000 good manufacturing jobs in our province, including in Niagara. Every single time one person lost their good manufacturing job, it had a serious impact, not just on them, but also on their families, their communities and their province, and not-for-profits like the United Way.

I've said that enough is enough. What we need in the province is to make an Ontario solution to address the needs of the auto sector. Our auto workers in the province of Ontario are some of the best in the world. They're highly skilled. They're productive. They put out the best quality products and have the best safety record. Make no mistake about it: They're represented by Unifor, but Canadian auto workers are the best in the world. Somebody said, "Well, how can you make that statement?" All you have to do is take a look at the awards they've had in Canada.

We need a government in this province that is committed to standing behind our auto workers. We don't need the Liberals to stand by the sidelines as the auto industry takes hit after hit. And we certainly don't need a PC Party that was very clear during the economic crisis in this country: They said they don't pick winners and losers. In other words, it didn't matter to them whether or not the auto industry would have survived in Canada.

When people ask me about that—"Well, how do you know that?"—I know they said it because I was at the bargaining table during that period of time, Madam Speaker. As we went around the clock, 24 hours, 36 hours, trying to bargain an agreement, if General Motors would have gone bankrupt, it would have meant that our retirees immediately—immediately the next day, just like it happened in Hamilton with the Steelworkers—would have lost their benefits. The members I was representing at that bargaining table, our retirees and their spouses, would have lost their benefits immediately, the next day. Think about that, the very next day, and yet we had a party in the province of Ontario saying, "We don't pick winners and losers."

You know what else would have happened then—and there is some protection under federal law, but for somebody who had a pension negotiated over a number of years, if they would have allowed General Motors to go bankrupt, pensions for our retirees would have gone to 34%. If I was making \$3,000 in a pension, it would have gone to \$1,000—immediately. That's what was at stake. By the way, I believe this round of bargaining is the same way. We all need to stand up for Unifor, those auto workers, those communities, our not-for-profits, to support an auto industry that's so important to the overall health of the economy in the province of Ontario. They're good-paying jobs. They're jobs you can raise your family on, just like I did mine, even send my children to university. We need those jobs, so we should send a clear message to the province of Ontario, those workers, my brothers and sisters, that we're behind them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to stand up in this House and speak about the speech from the throne in response to honourable members from the Conservative Party as well as from the NDP.

Madam Speaker, I must tell you that when we came to office 13 years ago, our electricity system was in a shambles. The whole system was falling apart. At that time, we had blackouts, we had brownouts. We were importing enormous amounts of power from our neighbouring states with very high prices. Even that wasn't adequate. At that time, the Conservative government put diesel generators around the province of Ontario. Not only did they pollute the environment, but they produced very expensive electricity. The system, as a whole, was falling apart.

Within the past 13 years what we have done is, we built a second tunnel under the city of Niagara Falls to Adam Beck power station which produces electricity for half a million population of this province. I have visited

that tunnel, Madam Speaker. It's a tunnel in which we have invested more than \$1 billion. It's a tunnel with a diameter of 14 metres, which will generate power for 100 years without any maintenance and repair.

We have refurbished nuclear power plants. When the NDP came to office in 1990, I remember vividly—maybe some people don't remember, but I remember vividly—their agenda was to shut down the nuclear power plants. Under pressure of the public they couldn't act, but if they really did it, today we wouldn't have the Darlington power station, Madam Speaker. So that is the history of them.

But I'm going to talk for just a few seconds, Madam Speaker, about the price of electricity. The way they sound, electricity should be free. Electricity is a commodity, a commodity has a price, but we are considering—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Well, I would have been interested to hear what the member opposite—the minister—had to say, because basically he was saying electricity is a commodity, and as the member from the NDP just said, we shouldn't be taking winners and losers. Well, we're creating terrible losers in this province in terms of the households and in terms of the businesses by just saying, "Well, that's the cost of electricity and that's the cost of business in the province, and too bad for you if you have high electricity rates. We don't care." That's a very uncaring thing to say, and very disappointing.

We're here today to talk about the throne speech. The throne speech was supposed to be a reset. It was supposed to be how we are going to see that we can't reverse the electricity rates. We can't just wave a magic wand and have them go back to the way they were when this government took office, when they were reasonable and we were competitive and we had a huge manufacturing sector in this province. But what we can do is we can work on—

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Well, we've already read from the C.D. Howe Institute that it's not the crumbling infrastructure that's causing us to have high electricity rates. The data is there. I often say, Madam Speaker, that the government is the party of social science and we're the party of science, because they don't want to look at data. They just want to look at ideology and dreams and wishes and some kind of fantasy magic.

The reality is that it's their decisions that have caused electricity rates to skyrocket in this province, and they continue to sign completely inefficient energy contracts that are causing electricity rates to continue to skyrocket. We were really hoping for a reset on this side of the House. We were really hoping to hear that they were going to stop signing these contracts that are contributing to the rising electricity rates, and they have not agreed to do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you there again.

To comment on the member from Niagara Falls: First of all, I have to say that it's profound and it's wonderful to have the voice of the union movement in the House, and he is that. We need such a voice, and it has to be a very loud one and clearly articulated, because were it not for our unions and our union movement we would not have a middle class. Politicians are happy to talk about a middle class, but in reality it's unions that gave us that middle class—and good unions, solid jobs with benefits.

That union rate has been falling, and one of the things we really didn't hear in the throne speech was how we were going to protect union jobs and how we were going to promote union jobs. To that end he made some excellent points, and we've stood behind those points, things like card-check certification. I would go even further and say that we need sectoral organizing. We certainly need anti-scab legislation. We used to have that in place in Ontario, and we have brought that forward many times.

We need to make it easier for people to organize and to get into unions. You know, in Sweden—I was there about five years ago—they have an 85% unionization rate. Even their McDonald's workers are unionized. People over here are shocked by that, Madam Speaker, but the member of Parliament we spoke to said, "If they weren't unionized, we wouldn't eat at McDonald's." That's the kind of mentality we need here. That's why they have the social services that we could only dream of here, like free child care, like free post-secondary—not just for those making under \$50,000; for everyone—and housing for everyone.

One of my concerns, and of course I'll go into this later when I have my chance to speak about this, is those other things we didn't hear about in the throne speech, like poverty. We didn't hear a lot about poverty, and poverty is real in Ontario and it's growing. We didn't hear about precarious employment. We didn't hear, really, about post-secondary education, and we hoped we would. So onward and upward, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Oh, no. I believe you already had your two minutes, Minister, so I'm going to turn to the Minister of Housing.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'll take it.

Hon. Michael Chan: You're the standby.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Yeah, the standby will take it.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for an opportunity to speak for a couple of minutes. I always enjoy this time of day when we get to hear what's happening and what constituents are telling a variety of members is important to them in their life, and I do take the opportunity to listen and to learn.

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I wanted just to take the time that I've got in response to talk a little bit about what I'm hearing from my

residents in the great riding of Newmarket–Aurora. We've talked to people about the speech from the throne and a balanced plan to build Ontario up for everyone, and that really is resonating with people in my riding, building Ontario up for everyone.

A lot of the conversation today has been around electricity. I wanted to just say that when it comes to electricity, what has excited the people of Newmarket–Aurora is the increased support for smaller manufacturers. Those are the companies—those larger businesses have been coming to me and asking for some relief that the major, very large manufacturers get. Through this change, we will be able to offer that to them, and I know, because we have heard from a number of them already, that they are absolutely delighted.

What does that mean for the average constituent in my riding? Well, it means more jobs, growth in their industries in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, and, of course, greater taxes for our municipal governments at a time that they need it. So that, when it comes to all the discussion around electricity prices and changes, has been what has resonated the most with the individuals in my riding.

I'll touch on one other thing that has really struck a very positive note—except I've run out of time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return to the member for Niagara Falls to wrap up.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks very much for everybody's comments.

It was touched on by the Conservative Party about the contracts that were signed under the Green Energy Act. If you noticed in the throne speech, because I've bargained the odd contract myself, they were actually pleased that they were able to renegotiate the contracts and say that they saved \$3.7 billion. I would look at the flip side of that and say, "Who bargained the contract in the first place that overpaid by \$3.7 billion?" I think that's something I would look at.

We saw the same thing when we talk about road safety, where they gave contracts for 12 or 13 years, awarded to the lowest bidder. But what we forgot to check when we did that—and I've raised this at meetings as well, so I'm not talking out of school here. What they did, Madam Speaker, is they gave it to the lowest bidder, but do you know what they forgot to ask them in the bidding? Did they have any equipment? I just thought that might be a good idea. Whoever is bargaining their collective agreements may want to take a look at that.

I've only got a minute left of my time here, but in Niagara we've got an issue around health care. I didn't get a chance to get to all my notes on health care. I only got through about half of my presentation; I talked a little long. But in health care in Niagara we have a new hospital in St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley's riding. Today, if you get an MRI in Hamilton, at St. Joe's, you can get one in about 34 days, a little longer than the 28 days that they want in the province of Ontario, but still not terrible. In Niagara, with a new hospital that they spent \$1.1 billion or \$1.2 billion on, you'll never guess what we have to wait. Anybody? Yell it out. It's 114 days to get an MRI

in Niagara. We need a new scanner in Niagara; we need to get a short-term solution to it. We need a long-term solution, which is more money. Talk to the LHINs. Get us another scanner in Niagara.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Sarnia.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was hoping I'd be able to get up and I'm pleased to do that. I'm very pleased today to have the opportunity to rise in the House and add my comments to the throne speech debate. I also want to welcome at this time my new colleague the member for Scarborough–Rouge River. I had a great time visiting with him and campaigning with him and his team during the recent by-election. I know he's going to do a great job representing the people of Scarborough–Rouge River. In fact, Mr. Cho's performance has already triggered quite a bit of action from this government.

That brings me to the subject of today's debate and the throne speech. Each speech from the throne is significant, and once again I was honoured to sit in my seat as the member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Sarnia–Lambton for what I believe is the sixth speech from the throne in my time here at Queen's Park. I will note that this speech from the throne will be one that I will remember probably more than any of the others, with the exception of maybe my very first, because it was in this speech from the throne that the government finally acknowledged that energy prices are out of control and that something needs to be done.

Rising energy prices have been an issue in my riding, for my constituents, almost as long as I've been a member of the Legislature. I was doing a little research through the official Hansard documents over the summer, and I have been raising concerns about the rising cost of energy all the way back to March 9, 2009. The debate that day was about the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, and I know the member from Wellington–Halton Hills will remember that well. Here is what I said more than seven years ago during that debate:

I felt that this bill, the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, “will do nothing but impose new costs on the energy system and consumers, that what it in fact is going to do is create a new bureaucracy with very little accountability to both the ratepayers and to the Legislature. We also don't believe that the government has really figured out how much this is going to cost consumers at the very end, and we believe that their initial estimates are way off.”

I'll just remind this House that the Minister of Energy at that time insisted that the bills would only increase by about 1% as a result of the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. I think that what we have seen play out over the last seven years is that the warnings and criticisms of the bill the official opposition put forward during that debate have pretty much become the reality in Ontario. Constituents now have triple-digit delivery and global adjustment charges on their bill each month. Rates have more than doubled since 2009.

When I made those comments in March 2009, the off-peak price of energy was four cents per kilowatt hour and the on-peak was 8.7 cents per kilowatt hour. Today, off-peak is 8.7 cents per kilowatt hour and on-peak is 18 cents per kilowatt hour, more than double the price in just five years. For the average family, electricity costs are up more than \$1,000 a year since the Liberals first took office in 2003.

How does that happen? Let's look at the facts. May 1, 2015, rates went up \$68; on November 1, 2015, rates went up \$53; on January 1, 2016, rates went up another \$96; on May 1, 2016, rates went up \$38. This was one that really got under people's skin because the government justified the increase by saying that people hadn't used enough energy over the winter months so they had to recoup those costs for the energy producers who, in fact, signed contracts with the government. The government screwed up. They made these contracts and then cried foul when they didn't take enough income in.

In all, in just one year, from May 1, 2015, to May 1, 2016, rates went up for the average family by \$255 a year. It's not stopping there, sadly. On November 1 of this year, rates are likely to climb again. No matter which way you slice it, electricity prices in Ontario are going up. It's not just building Ontario up, it's raising prices in Ontario, and they're going up.

The Ministry of Energy's own long-term energy plan predicts that the average monthly residential energy bill will increase between 26% to 36% over the next 15 years, or around \$500 to \$750 per year. The official opposition believes the increase will be more like 42%. If there's anyone who thinks that the government's numbers aren't too bad, let me just remind you that the previous Minister of Energy, back in 2009, predicted only a 1% increase. I would take any number that this government publishes with a grain of salt. The fact is, we just don't know what else this government will do to mismanage this energy file. It certainly had a lot of people over the years mismanaging it.

They certainly took the opportunity during the throne speech to pat themselves on the back. In fact, I thought they'd have to call the ambulance, they'd break their arm patting themselves on the back. We don't know how many more expensive energy contracts they will sign, or if they will roll any more costs, like those of the cancelled gas plants, into the global adjustment charge.

As I said, I appreciate the fact that during the throne speech I heard there would be a rebate of the provincial portion of the HST on energy bills. That is something that the PC caucus has called for in this Legislature for many years. I remember speaking on it, back as early as 2009, saying that it was a mistake to do this. I'm optimistic that this means the government is prepared to do even more on this file, because in reality the government is estimating that this will save the average Ontario household only \$130 per year. That works out to 36 cents per day in relief; I think that's been brought up in the House more than once since the throne speech. That's hardly the lifeline that people have been asking for.

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The former Minister of Energy once said that the price of energy—get this—was only going up by the price of a cup of coffee. I wonder what the honourable member from Ottawa West–Nepean thinks about the amount of relief that his government is offering now. You can't buy much of a cup of coffee with 36 cents. I have a Keurig at home and I know that the Keurig cups are a lot more than 36 cents a cup—probably around a dollar.

Really, removing the provincial portion of the HST from energy bills is too little and too late. It doesn't address the real reasons that energy has become so unaffordable in Ontario. It doesn't address the real reason that energy poverty has become a real and overwhelming issue across Ontario, including in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton. It is unconscionable that in Ontario, a former economic engine of our country, people—seniors, single parents, low-income and middle-class people—are struggling to afford the very necessities of a modern existence, necessities like electricity.

For many of us who live in small-town Ontario or cities, electricity is a part of the energy mix that we use in our day-to-day lives. But for others who live in rural parts of Ontario—which represents a big portion of Sarnia–Lambton—where they don't have access to natural gas for heating or cooking, they depend on affordable electricity. After 13 years of this government, there are many residents and families across Ontario who once again this winter are going to have to choose between heating and eating.

I want to acknowledge Global News for doing a very good series of reports on this issue this summer. I also want to acknowledge the freelance writer Jim Merriam, who has done a number of enlightening columns this summer on the fact that this government has rigged the electricity system so that rural Ontario customers pay higher delivery charges, usually two to three times as much as the average urban household. Parker Gallant, a well-known retired banker, also has done a number of good columns, and I look forward to those every few weeks.

The official opposition has been challenging this government's management of the energy system for some time. Hopefully the media will maintain its focus on this issue, so that more Ontarians are aware of the real effects the Liberal policies have had on this province.

I will continue to do my part to draw attention to this matter through various means, like today's debate on the throne speech. I also have a petition on my website calling for action from the government to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontario's energy bills. I've already received well over 2,200 signatures in only a few days of making this petition available.

With the petition, I've also asked that people share any comments they have for myself, the Premier and the Minister of Energy. These comments are alarming. I

promised my constituents, so I'm going to share every single one of these comments with the new Minister of Energy, so that he understands how serious this issue is. I would like to just read a few of these comments into the record.

Linda from Sarnia says, "An 8% reduction is not going to cut it! Stop overcharging this province!!"

Melissa from Sarnia says, "A family shouldn't have to decide between rent and hydro, the prices are getting out of control. All this extra energy created by all the green energy projects should be helping to bring down costs not drive them to ridiculous prices."

Tim from Petrolia said, "You are going to drive industry and businesses out of Ontario and put me in financial stress, in fact you already are."

Pamela in Sarnia says, "I live in a one-bedroom house. My bills have been between \$1,000 and \$5,000 and we are trying to retire, what are you thinking?"

Finally, Tara from Sarnia says, "I bought energy-efficient appliances ... my hydro bill goes up! I cook on a BBQ more because it's summer ... my hydro bill goes up! I put in a clothes line to run the dryer less ... my hydro bill goes up! I go around turning off lights and things like my parents did when hydro was cheap ... and my hydro bill goes up And now I am going to have to start paying the new carbon tax!!! Enough is enough."

These are just five comments picked at random from more than a thousand comments that were submitted. I'm sure that the government members, the backbenchers and the cabinet ministers have—Sarnia–Lambton is not unique. I mean, I like to think it's unique, but I'm sure it's not unique in higher electricity prices. I know that the government finally must be hearing—and that's why they did this so-called reset or reboot. The jury is still out on how much of a reboot it is.

The last comment should be a red flag for the members of this House. During the throne speech, it was made clear that cap-and-trade is a scheme that this government is going ahead with, starting January 1, 2017. I've referred to it a number of times as cap-and-tax. The government is estimating that cap-and-tax, or cap-and-trade, will cost about \$156 annually per household. That number right there should grab everyone's attention. With one hand, the government is offering a \$130 discount in the amount of the HST provincial portion they charge on electricity, but at the same time they're adding \$156 in cap-and-trade costs for other daily essentials, like gasoline to get to work, natural gas to heat your home and any product you buy in a grocery store delivered by a truck.

This estimate from the government doesn't tell the whole story. The estimate of \$156 per year per household only represents the 4.3 cents per litre charge on gasoline and 3.3 cents per cubic metre charge for natural gas that consumers will be purchasing directly. It doesn't represent the increased costs of products that consumers will now pay at the grocery store or the pharmacy as companies pass their additional business costs on to consumers. Cap-and-trade raises the price of all goods and services that consume fossil fuel energy as part of

their operations, which, as much as I can figure, is pretty much all of them. Private sector estimates on the impact of the cap-and-trade system predict that household costs are more likely to increase by close to \$400 a year. This isn't just the official opposition making these warnings to the public.

I would like to comment about cap-and-tax, or cap-and-trade, while I have a couple of minutes here. There was almost a \$100-million investment in my riding that was announced back in 2015. I was there with the Premier at the time. Now there are serious concerns. It has been on the local media, Blackburn News, that they're concerned that this investment has been put on hold. We're very concerned. It's a lot of good jobs. It's a reinvestment in a major business there. Premier Wynne in Sarnia-Lambton at that time, in 2015, said that this investment—it was an investment by the private sector; no government money—was a vote of confidence in Ontario's chemical industry. But I fear that this cancellation, or even pause or suspension of this project, is a vote of non-confidence in this province and in her government.

The major rumblings in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton are that cap-and-trade, on top of the highest electricity prices in North America and the litany of government regulations, has made the overall business climate in Ontario untenable. I'm concerned that in the near future we're going to see more investment plans scrapped and the much-needed economic growth choked off by cap-and-trade schemes.

To get back to this scheme, I was watching Global News one night, at least a year ago now, and the former Liberal Minister of Finance, the honourable Greg Sorbara, called the cap-and-trade scheme a \$1.9-billion "flow-through" tax on consumers. I just want to read from this quote from Mr. Sorbara from his appearance that spring on TVO's *The Agenda*. Former Minister Sorbara said at that time, "Cap-and-trade is a system where the government sells to industry an imaginary product called carbon credits, and those industries pass the cost—the \$1.9 billion in this case—ultimately through the system, and it gives rise to higher prices at the gas pump, for the gas that heats our homes, and ultimately for virtually every product that we buy." Mr. Sorbara later went on to say, "There's no evidence anywhere in the world that the cap-and-trade system actually does work to significantly reduce carbon emissions, and until I see that evidence"—Mr. Sorbara speaking—"I have to be a little bit skeptical about the whole scheme, other than it's going to bring a whole lot of new money into the government."

Madam Speaker, those are the words of the former Liberal Minister of Finance, the only Liberal Minister of Finance for this government who has ever tabled a balanced budget in the last 13 years, if I remember correctly. He raises some very serious red flags about this cap-and-tax scheme. I get the sense from his comments that he doesn't actually believe this plan will work. I have to say, I agree with him. I didn't agree with everything he has ever said, but I agree with that.

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This has to be troubling for this government, because they have been promising the public many wonderful things—baubles in the window—like the subways and light rail transit, big rebates on electric cars, and then free electricity for these cars. But the carbon market in California that this government has attached to itself has collapsed and failed to deliver the revenue in two consecutive carbon credit auctions. So what is this government going to do to live up to all the promises it has made? Will other important programs like health care and education continue to be squeezed?

Unfortunately, this government's health care legacy has become cuts, not care. Thirteen years of scandal, waste and mismanagement have taken away funding for essential health care services. I have been meeting on a more frequent basis with constituents who are very concerned about the cuts they are noticing to health care. They are seeing it in home care, at the hospital and in long-term-care homes. There's the feeling that this government is not supporting the front-line nurses, doctors, therapists and personal support workers in their role as health care providers. The government is rationing health care to residents in Ontario in an attempt to squeeze more dollars from the system.

At this point, I would like to point out that the government is still not providing the free shingles vaccine to seniors aged 65 to 70 which was promised in the February budget. My office has contacted the Minister of Health's office several times, asking when they will fulfill this promise, and we can't get a straight answer. Seniors are calling my office because they want this vaccine. I certainly hope the minister will deliver on his commitment to seniors. It would be shameful not to.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the Liberal government is finally taking some action to reduce the cost of energy for the people of Ontario. Expensive energy has been the number one issue in my office for the last seven years. Every spring we hear from dozens of people who are being cut off by the power company because they have fallen so far behind with their energy bills. Not a month goes by that someone doesn't present at my constituency office with an energy bill they simply can't afford.

Last year, Bluewater Power in Sarnia had more than 3,500 residential accounts in arrears at the end of the year, representing \$527,000. That's up by more than a thousand residential accounts from just two years earlier. The fact is, the government has claimed it has done things to mitigate the price increases for the vulnerable and the middle class, but they have just not worked. More needs to be done.

Earlier, I just read five of the more than 1,000 comments that I've received through my website regarding the high price of electricity. I'm going to present every single comment I've received on this issue to the Minister of Energy and demand that more be done. So far, the minister's performance on this file has been lacking. The people of Sarnia need this minister to take real action, to create affordable action.

I always like to be the optimist. I hope that we don't have to wait until the next provincial election, and the next throne speech, to see real change on the energy file.

Madam Speaker, I've enjoyed the opportunity today to stand up and speak. It has always been a privilege to stand here representing the residents of Sarnia-Lambton. It's a privilege, I look forward to it, and I look forward to the rest of the debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate having the opportunity to stand up again to talk about this. We've heard about the crisis in hydro over and over again. But this time I want to talk about the importance, and I touched a little bit on it in my closing minutes of my 20 minutes when I talked about the MRIs in Niagara—I think it's equally important to talk about what's going on with our health care system, and some of the problems that we're facing.

When you look at the projects that were built, they already said we spent \$8.3 billion too much on P3s. Again, that's with a B—billion. Can you imagine, in Niagara, if we would have taken that money and used it for health care?

I'm going to give you an example. I've used this example before, but I think it's good. You get a reboot? It's a good time now to give you a reboot on what's going on in health care.

In St. Catharines, they built a brand new hospital. It was a P3. It ended up being about \$1.1 billion. I might be out by a couple of bucks, but it's certainly in that range. It's 365 beds. In Peterborough, they built a very similar hospital, with about 340 beds. So here we have two hospitals, one in St. Catharines, one in Peterborough. One was done as a P3. The other one was publicly funded, publicly delivered. The one in St. Catharines cost \$1.1 billion, \$1.2 billion. The one in Peterborough cost \$365 million. So you can imagine: If you would have done that in St. Catharines, you could have taken that extra \$700 million that you saved and reinvested it back into local health care, whether that be home care, whether that be MRI machines. I just found you \$700 million.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm pleased to rise today. Also, I take this opportunity to congratulate MPP Raymond Cho for your recent win in Scarborough-Rouge River.

During this throne speech debate, I heard many members reference the Scarborough-Rouge River election. Since I myself participated in that election, I want to share a bit of my experience there.

On election day, voting day, I was delegated to position myself in a Chinese seniors' home. I tried to do my best job to convince the seniors. One person was walking in, and I kind of asked him, "What's your preference?" "Oh, I'm voting number one on the ballot, Raymond Cho." "Okay, why is that?" "Oh, he's Chinese. He's a Chinese Canadian." I said, "No, he's not a Chinese Canadian; he's a Korean Canadian."

Of course, during the Scarborough-Rouge River campaign, a lot of what was being talked about was not about electrical costs or any other things, but sex education. Of course, we know that flip-flop is quite tremendous. It actually seems to me that it is a never-ending flip-flop of the opposition leader.

Anyhow, there is not much time. I wish I had more time because I do have a number of things I want to address from the throne speech, but I will use another opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to join in the debate about the throne speech because, frankly, it's too little, too late. Ontario families will continue to see their hydro bills get more expensive. When I speak to the constituents—and I'm sure for your constituents as well, Speaker—high electricity rates are the top issue. They want to see a government that listens and takes real action on their priorities, not a tired and self-interested government that goes through the motions.

While short-term relief for Ontario families is desperately needed, Monday's announcement will do nothing to stop their hydro bills from increasing. What's clear is that the only reason the Premier acknowledged hydro rates are a real problem is because it's starting to affect the Ontario Liberal Party. If the Wynne Liberals were serious about tackling the province's energy crisis—and, Speaker, it is a crisis—the government would have committed to stop signing contracts for energy we don't need and immediately halted any further sales of Hydro One shares.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to be able to rise in the House and to follow the member from Sarnia-Lambton. We disagree on a lot of things politically, but he represents his people and his concerns in his riding. Although his riding and my riding are a long ways apart, we have a lot of the same concerns and we work together on a lot of issues.

He focused a lot on hydro, as we all are today. It's kind of odd for a throne speech, because usually in a throne speech you focus on all kinds of things, but everybody is focusing on hydro. The reason that is so is because this is basically the hydro throne speech. It's the channel-changer hydro throne speech.

If you remember the first throne speech from the Wynne government, I believe the catchy title was "Building Ontario Up." The sequel throne speech is to "build Ontario up for everyone." Who did they forget the first time? I'm still trying to figure that out. They were concentrating on building Ontario up for somebody the first time. Now they figure out, "Oh, wait a second. Some of the people we didn't think about building up the first time are getting pretty upset, so we'd better throw them a bone."

1520

That's more what this is about. This isn't about really figuring out what ails the member from Sarnia—

Lambton's riding or what ails my riding or what's killing rural Ontario. This isn't about that. This is about throwing a bone; throwing something against the wall and hoping it sticks because they see, "Oh, wait a second. We didn't think politically, but now it's getting touchy, so we better throw them a bone."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Simcoe-Lambton to wrap up this round of debate.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Whitby-Oshawa and—I'm not sure who over there. I'm sorry; I lost track. I was thinking about my speech that I made. Anyway, I do want to thank everyone. As I say, it's always a pleasure to rise and speak in the first place and then to thank everyone for the comments that they did make.

This is one of the number one issues in my riding and, I'm sure, for many members—you don't have to be just a rural member, because urban people are starting to see this now. I know that for a fact, or the government wouldn't have acted. Obviously the government members are starting to—well, just starting—are pushing the leader's office to do something, and they've reacted in this way. I've heard that it's—I'm not going to repeat it—too little, too late. I've heard it so much. But 36 cents a day is going to be negated on January 1 when the new increases come in. Seventy per cent of the costs, as someone quoted earlier, can be directly tracked back to these green energy contracts that were signed, which I spoke against in March 2009. I wish I'd known; I would have gone out and invested in some stocks or something. If I could actually have predicted what was going to happen in the market, I'd be a lot better off today than I am. According to the Auditor General, it has cost \$9.2 billion over the years because of these renewable contracts.

If they wanted to phase out coal, which they go on and on and brag about, all they needed to do was increase nuclear and increase the gas plants, which they had to build anyway to chase the load. They had to have the gas plants to chase the wind turbines and solar. Just build the gas plants and get on with it. Forget about these wind turbines, which have destroyed rural Ontario, as far as I'm concerned. They've split families and communities. The sooner they bring them to an end, the better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure and an honour to stand in Ontario's provincial Parliament and bring forth the views of my constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh.

I was recently reading the Toronto newspapers, and it said that Premier Wynne has cause for concern after the recent results in the by-election in Scarborough-Rouge River.

I was at a meeting last Friday and, out of the blue, I heard that the Premier had prorogued the first session of Parliament. She said that she wanted to start this session off with a speech from the throne so that she could outline her new priorities. She didn't say that it was

because of the defeat the Wynne government suffered in the by-election in Scarborough-Rouge River, but most political observers put two and two together. Indeed, I'm told that members of her own party had told her that, over the summer, they bumped into a lot of people who told them they'd better do something quick about hydro rates in Ontario.

In my riding, I've lost count of the number of people who said, "Do you really have to wait for another two years to get rid of the Wynne government?" I said, "Yeah. Unless she calls an early election, that's it."

The Wynne government is out of favour in this province. The Wynne government has lost its way. The Wynne government has broken faith with the people who put them into office. The Wynne government has been listening to the wrong people. The Wynne government still has some rich and powerful friends on Bay Street, but the Wynne government no longer has the support of the people on the main streets across this great province.

Now, as you know, Speaker, I'm usually not one to point fingers, but one of the main reasons, I believe, for the rejection by the voters in Scarborough-Rouge River was the way the Wynne government has mishandled the hydro file.

I know the Wynne government likes to say they campaigned door to door two years ago on selling Hydro One, and that simply isn't factual. The Wynne government said they would consider selling some provincial assets, true; and the spokespeople for the Wynne government spoke of the possibility, such as vacant land as an asset, or a building that houses a government agency as an asset. No one, not one of those members of the Wynne government, can honestly say today they went door to door and said, "Vote for me and I'll sell Hydro One." They did not do that and they can't stand up here today and say they told the people at the door they were going to sell their publicly traded hydro distribution system.

In fact, if you check with Hansard, Speaker—I invite you to do so—Premier Wynne stood here in the House and said during question period she wasn't going to sell Hydro One. Then someone got to her and said, I suppose, something like, "Well, actually, we could do that, because of your vague reference to selling provincial assets." If so, they probably said something like, "It won't be a popular decision, but we have a majority, and we can do what we want."

Now, when the people of Ontario got wind of this—and they did polling on it, Speaker, as you know—more than 80% of the residents of Ontario that were polled said they opposed the Wynne government selling off Hydro One, turning public power over to private hands. A majority of the municipal mayors and councillors also told the Wynne government they didn't think it was a good idea to sell public power. They actually passed motions in their various municipalities opposed to the Wynne government getting rid of hydro and giving it to private ownership.

And hydro rates, Speaker? While all of this was going on, hydro rates kept on going up, going up, going up and

rubbing salt into the wound. The Wynne government got rid of the people who were running Hydro before, brought in a new team, and paid the new guy in charge \$4 million a year.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Only if he makes his bonus.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Four million dollars a year if he makes his bonus, as the member from Beaches—East York says. Four million dollars a year—Speaker, where do you think that money is going to come from? It's going to come from you, it's going to come from me, it's going to come out of our pockets, because they will go to the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, and say, "We need more money, we have got to raise our rates because our employees have a higher salary now and we have to pay them."

Obviously we're in trouble, and everyone else in Ontario is in trouble if they're connected to the electrical grid. I know the Wynne government likes to say it's not them that approve the rate increases, it's the Ontario Energy Board. The non-elected members of the Ontario Energy Board are appointed by the Wynne government. The \$4-million-a-year man running Hydro One is appointed, hired, by the Wynne government. Hydro One says to the OEB, "We need a rate hike." Bada boom, bada bing, ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching. Well, what happens? It's no mystery, Speaker. We don't have to send in Inspector Murdoch here. It's pretty plain to see.

The Wynne government likes to say that it started with my good friends in the Conservative Party, they started this mess. In fact, a couple of days ago, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change told us that 80% of the system was in terrible shape and needed an upgrade when the McGuinty Liberals, prior to the Wynne government, took over from the Harris Conservatives—or the Eves Conservatives.

So the Wynne government says, "Okay, we have a problem. We'll spend a whole bunch of money, billions and billions of dollars, upgrading the systems, since 80% of it is bad, and we'll have a great system." We do have a great system, but why would you spend billions working it up to be the greatest system in the world, and then give it away at fire sale prices? You're giving it away at fire sale prices.

1530

Some friends of the Wynne government are doing well on that. They're buying our public system. They wouldn't be buying it, even at fire sale prices, if they didn't expect to turn a profit, right? A healthy profit. And where does that profit come from, Speaker? You may well ask. Well, let me tell you. It's coming out of your pocket. It's coming out of my pocket. It's coming out of all of our pockets, and we're going to be paying it for the rest of our lives.

The throne speech was a golden opportunity for the Wynne government, and Premier Wynne especially, to admit to her mistake. Speaker, there's no harm in admitting to a mistake, even one as outrageous as selling our publicly owned electrical distribution system. Premier Wynne and the Wynne government could have used the throne speech to announce that no more shares

of Hydro One will be sold. That would have been greeted with applause.

The Wynne government could have gone further and said they would encourage those who have bought shares in Hydro One to actually sell them back to the people of Ontario. That would have been greeted with enthusiastic applause.

It would have sent a message, Speaker—a very strong message—to those who have lost faith in the Wynne government. That message, Speaker, could have said, "We listened to you, we heard what you had to say and we're finally going to make it right." Instead, despite the announcement that Premier Wynne got the real message from the by-election in Scarborough—Rouge River, we get word that a rebate on our taxes will come back to us.

This rebate, Speaker, as you know, is on a Liberal tax that never should have been put on the backs of Ontario taxpayers in the first place, a tax on an essential service. It's a money grab. And instead of stopping the collection of that tax immediately, we have to keep paying it until January. Insult to injury, Speaker: In a couple of months, our hydro rates are going up again. It's robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Premier Wynne said Tuesday the throne speech outlined the Wynne government's priorities. Premier Wynne said government is about making choices, and Premier Wynne said her choices are clear. Premier Wynne said the choices the Wynne government is making are in the interest of all Ontarians.

Speaker, I have to disagree with Premier Wynne. The Wynne government has fostered a flawed system of electrical distribution that is not in the best interest of the people of Ontario. People in my area are living with what is now being called "energy poverty." Their hydro bills are eating up way too much of their disposable income.

EnWin is the local utility provider in the city of Windsor. At the end of the year in 2014 we had more than 2,000 local customers in arrears. At the end of 2015, we had more than 6,000 local hydro users in arrears. It tripled, Speaker.

If you look around, the year before, Toronto had more than 60,000 people in arrears. Across the province, nearly 567,000 people—Ontario families—were behind on their hydro bills at the end of last year. Now, what does that tell you, Speaker?

We're good people in Ontario. We like to pay our bills. Sometimes we just don't have enough money, and 567,000 is 8% of hydro customers. To them, I guess, it's a shortfall of \$173 million. To most of us, that can be seen as an energy crisis. Not to the Wynne government; but to most of us, when you have 8% of your customers not paying your bill, you're in crisis.

I don't get it. I just don't get it. You look over there today, at the members of the Wynne government who are here this afternoon: They're not wearing blinders. Their eyes are open, but there's a disconnect, somehow, with reality. Many of us in Ontario are living in energy poverty, and I believe that's thanks to the Wynne government.

People have been telling me their hydro bills—believe it or not, Speaker—are now higher than their municipal property taxes. Can you believe it? The home you're living in, that you pay municipal taxes on, is not as much as what you have to pay to hydro to heat the house and turn the lights on.

There's something wrong with that picture. There's something wrong in Ontario. We're paying too much for electricity, and the Wynne government doesn't have a plan to change it.

The Wynne government came to power with a promise to be open and transparent, and to have consultations with the people of Ontario. We just had a consultation in Scarborough—Rouge River, as you know. The people of Ontario have sent a message, and they have a lot to say. The Wynne government doesn't listen, and they haven't listened on this issue. Do you know what, Speaker? It's time for the Wynne government to be replaced.

There comes a time in the lifespan of every government when it reaches its best-before date, its shelf life. The people of Ontario are coming to the conclusion, as I have, that this Wynne government has hit the wall. Too many former supporters are disappointed and disillusioned with the Wynne government.

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They don't like to hear it, Speaker. I know they don't like to hear it.

Voters who consider themselves among the progressives in their thinking are seeing the Wynne government as anything but progressive. They see a Premier who isn't listening and hasn't been listening to their views. The Wynne government isn't living up to the hype they came into office with, and this is not the Premier the progressives pinned their hopes on.

Hydro rates are out of control. Business people are relocating to other provinces or crossing the border and setting up shop in Manitoba, Michigan, New York and Ohio. The men and women who run our largest manufacturing companies are getting nervous. They're not certain there will be a future for them in Ontario as hydro rates risk leaving them uncompetitive.

So I ask, Speaker, who is the Wynne government listening to? Why didn't they signal more in the throne speech to deal with this issue?

On Tuesday—Speaker, I don't know if you heard him or not—the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Mr. Leal, was commenting in the House on the throne speech. I had to go back and check Hansard, because I wasn't sure I heard him right, but I did. The minister, in discussing the rebate come January on the 8% provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax, said, "Philosophically, I've always felt that that's very important because something as important as a commodity like electricity should not be subject to consumption or sales taxes." A minister of the crown saying he has always been opposed to the collection of that tax and a tax being imposed on an essential service such as electricity—a minister of the crown. I don't get it, but it's in his own

words, and he said, "I've always been opposed to this. They shouldn't be taxing an essential commodity, electricity."

Today that may sell well in the minister's home riding of Peterborough, but why didn't he say something before now? Where has he been the last six years? Has he ever voiced that view in cabinet? Has he ever voiced it in caucus, Speaker? You would know. And if he hasn't, why hasn't he?

Now, if he had—and I'll be fair: Maybe he has, and maybe other members of the Wynne government have said the same thing to the Premier in caucus. They certainly haven't said it in public. But if they said it in caucus and she still wasn't listening—because nothing happened in the years since she's been Premier—who has she been listening to while she's spurned the views of her caucus members? I might be being unfair, Speaker. I've yet to grace the front bench. I hope to do it at some point. But the members on the other side who, like myself, don't do that, maybe they've voiced that concern. Maybe they haven't. So if she hasn't been listening, who has she been listening to? Why did those friends of Premier Wynne have her ear while she spurned the philosophical views of her cabinet and caucus team? Inquiring minds would like to know.

Premier Wynne might say she has seen the light now, while many of the people in Ontario are sitting at home in the dark because they can't afford to turn on their lights. Soon, when the cold weather comes in, these folks are going to be sitting in the dark and in the cold, because they can't afford to turn on the heat in their homes either. There are nearly 600,000 families in Ontario in arrears on their hydro bill: 600,000.

1540

Who have the members of the Wynne government been listening to? Who are the members of the Wynne government listening to now, and who will the members of the Wynne government be listening to in the future: next week, next month, next year, or in 2018, when we get to go to the polls and send a message that the members of the Wynne government can no longer ignore?

My friend the new Minister of Energy won't admit that we have an energy crisis when it comes to hydro rates. We overproduce. We're giving it away, something like, as I think I heard the other day, \$3 billion worth of energy over the last three years or so. They get it back, we get it back, for a few pennies on the dollar. The Wynne government says those pennies are put into the books as revenue, but they don't take into account the cost of producing that electricity and distributing it. Anyway, this cheap electricity is now being used to lure away the business people of Ontario who are going away to other provinces and states and setting up companies that could be employing good people here.

So I say to the members of the Wynne government, please stop giving away our hydro. Please stop selling off our shares in Hydro One. Please end the 8% provincial portion of the HST now, immediately. Don't charge it. Don't delay and give us a rebate. You should never have been charging us in the first place.

Your federal Liberal cousins in Ottawa shouldn't be charging us either. The Minister of Agriculture has it right. He's always been opposed to it, and if he has always been opposed to it, he has an obligation right now, today, to write a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau and say, "Buddy, I've always been opposed to this. I'm opposed to it now. You should stop charging this now, because the people of Ontario are opposed to it too. You have no right charging us a sales tax on an essential service, on an essential commodity like electricity." The members of the Wynne government who feel that way should be demanding that the Trudeau Liberal government do away with its portion of that harmonized sales tax as well. You owe it to yourselves for your integrity. You owe it to the people of Ontario, because already members of your cabinet have said they've always been opposed to it.

If you're opposed to it, stand up on principle and get rid of it today, not on the first of January. You've pulled the wool over the people's eyes in Ontario for far too long. It's not a good tax, and if it's not good enough for the people of Ontario, it's certainly not good enough for anybody else across the country. Don't charge it and rebate it; just kill it. Show some leadership. Show the people of Ontario that you're listening. Admit that the throne speech was a flop. Just come out and say, "We blew it. We missed a great opportunity." That's what the people of Ontario want to hear: that you've actually listened to them and you're going to do something about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to rise to join the debate on the throne speech. When I was listening to the throne speech the other day, I was thinking about my community and how this is going to impact the quality of life for the people in my community. I could talk for some length about some of those things. I only have a couple of minutes, so I'll be very brief.

One of the things that stood out for me was the emphasis on continuing to make sure our young people have the skills that they need for a changing workforce. I taught at York University, so I experienced the challenges young people have in finding a job even when they've had a wonderful education. I've experienced this at the doors: young people who are qualified, hard-working, skilled, have the right education, and can't find a job. That's one of the areas that our government has made a priority through the throne speech.

Examples of that are putting a new emphasis on math skills, expanding experiential learning and encouraging young people to turn their good ideas into start-ups. These are the kinds of things that business people call for, that young people call for. These are some of the things our government is doing to address that issue.

Another one that's critical to my community is health care. Health care is of concern to people of all ages, but it's certainly of concern to many seniors in my community. This is a government that has invested and will continue to invest in health care, and I'm proud of

that. We're investing in front-line workers, helping with the cost of prescription drugs, reducing wait times for specialists.

One of the things that I'm proud of is the investments that the government has made in services across Ontario. But in my riding in particular, this has increased funding to the Dorothy Ley Hospice, which provides incredibly important palliative care to people and families at end of life; and investments in community care, which allow not only the people who need the care, but their families, to have the support that they need. We continue to need more community care, but our government continues to invest and grow that funding rapidly—and the recent investment in Etobicoke General.

These are just examples of how our government is investing in health care. These two issues that I've talked about—helping young people in the workforce and the health care—are examples of how we're making lives better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to take the next couple of minutes to go back over an issue that is embedded in the throne speech that I think requires or deserves a little more light shone on it.

One of the things that is mentioned in the throne speech is the need to introduce legislation that would remove the cost of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax. I want to zero in on that, because of the fact that we all know that at one point in time, it was this very government that made sure it was going to be included. So at one time they were including it as part, and now they're talking about taking it away.

The reason it concerns me is that it illustrates the behind-the-scenes understanding of a tax. Historically, a tax has always been something that has been required of citizens to pay for something that they need, whether it's hospitals, road or whatever. But the concept was, "We need to collect these monies from you, and that allows us to use them at our discretion, but for your benefit." Here we have instead a government that said, "Yes, we need this," but now, for the past few months, in a growing voice of objection, people across the province, in every one of our ridings, have hydro as the worst issue they are dealing with. So all of a sudden, then, instead of this tax—because that's what it is, and in fact it was a tax on a tax—the assumption is that it's there as a necessity. Now we see differently.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad I'm here today to provide some questions and comments on this throne speech because really, it's disheartening: this build-up prorogation, that this government was going to announce some earth-shattering, life-changing policies or announcements that were going to build Ontario up for everyone—here we are debating about hydro and how it's unaffordable.

If you wanted to build Ontario up, you shouldn't have sold off hydro in the first place. It's counterintuitive.

"We've sold off hydro. Now we're going to give people a rebate on hydro." Stop the sale of hydro. Make rates affordable so people can pay their bills.

We heard the member from Windsor–Tecumseh talk about how people are paying utility costs that are higher than their property taxes. That's absolutely illegitimate and unrealistic for many people. The utility costs that we're experiencing today because of the mismanagement of this file are astronomical, and it's everybody who's experiencing it, from seniors to families. Everyone is suffering from these bad decisions.

Speaker, I have to tell you that not having other members across the way stand up to speak to this so impactful, important throne speech talks to the policies they're making and can't stand behind. They don't support them. When they were going to increase the drug deductible by 70%—they turned around that decision, thank goodness, and didn't increase it by an extra \$170. But now you've got policies in the throne speech that they're supposed to be speaking to, yelling from the rafters how great it is, and we're not hearing from them.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

1550

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on my friend the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's comments on the throne speech. Also, it gives me an opportunity to share my thoughts on the throne speech this week.

I understand and I've heard and I appreciate the concerns over our electricity price in the province. But I want to point out, from what I've been hearing for the past couple of days, the opposition members are speaking to our electricity system as if it was perfect before we entered government, and we all know it wasn't perfect. In fact, there wasn't any large spending on infrastructure for years. Everyone who owns a home understands that, from time to time, you have to spend money to renovate your property. That's exactly what we were expected to do by the voters of Ontario. We needed to upgrade the system and we needed to look at ways to produce our electricity in a cleaner way, and that's exactly what we did.

I remember in the 2014 election, we spoke to so many people and they were telling us that we've got to spend money on infrastructure—roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, public transit—and that's what we've done. But money has to come from somewhere.

I think it's very exciting news that the government is addressing the pocketbook issues, basically, for constituents across the province and understands the hardship they are facing in giving this rebate.

But on the other side, I want to point out the fact that we are creating 100,000 daycare spaces. That means young people, well-educated parents, can go out and get a job and contribute to our economy, which enjoyed a 6.1% increase in GDP in the last two years. I think it's all—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

I return to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to wrap up.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My friend Howard Hampton wrote a book 14 years ago on public power and I was re-reading that. Unlike Premier Wynne, previous Premiers nurtured and grew our public power system in Ontario. They fought long and hard to keep it out of private hands. Premier James Whitney, back at the turn of the century, when we were just starting to harness hydroelectric power at Niagara Falls—when he took office in February 1905, he stated, "I say on behalf of the government, that the water power all over the country should not in the future be made the sport and prey of capitalists and shall not be treated as anything else but a valuable asset of the people of Ontario, whose trustees this government of the people are." That was Whitney, another former Premier, who established the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, the forerunner of today's Hydro One.

A former mayor of London, Sir Adam Beck, was named the first chair of that body. Together, they fought some hard battles against those who felt privatization was better than public power. But they believed in democracy. They ran a referendum. They asked the voters of Ontario, who would be using hydro power from Niagara Falls, what they wanted: public or private power.

It was on January 1, 1907, a public referendum. By a huge majority, public power was chosen over private. Voters in Toronto, Hamilton, Brantford, Guelph, London, St. Thomas, Stratford, Waterloo and Woodstock as well as in 10 other communities made it really clear they wanted public power then, just like the people of Ontario want public power now.

In 1913, in Ontario, more than a dozen municipalities, including Windsor, voted to join the public hydro family. In 1917, Premier William Hearst ran another referendum and, again, another huge majority for public power.

Sir Adam Beck, Hydro's first chairman, among his last recorded words on his deathbed, said, "I had hoped to live" long enough "to forge a band of iron around the Hydro to prevent destruction by the politicians."

Unfortunately, that's what we're seeing today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I have an older laptop at home. It has become slow to react, some of the keys on the keyboard don't function anymore and it has difficulty connecting to my network. Periodically, I turn it on and give it one last try, reboot it and hope that the lost functionality will somehow return. But my disappointment is constant. It is simply too old, too tired and the technology outdated. Like my old laptop, this government is too old, too tired, too slow to react and one that has clearly lost its connection to the people who elected it into office. A throne speech like we heard on Monday in effect is an attempted hard reboot of this Liberal government. It will do nothing to improve the lives of hard-working families in Ontario.

What's clear, Madam Speaker, is that escalating hydro rates is the single key issue facing residents in my riding and, I'm sure, yours today. Every couple of months,

almost everyone in the province is reminded of how critical it has become when they open their mail. The questions people are then forced to ask themselves is, "How can I pay this bill and feed my family?"

After losing the Scarborough–Rouge River by-election and understanding then that none of the other ridings are safe, this government is suddenly acutely aware that energy costs are too high and hurting Ontario families. How did this government react to this revelation? They proposed to drop the PST portion of the provincial hydro bill: an annual savings of 8%—8%—for consumers. Let us not forget that over the past year, according to Statistics Canada's consumer price index, electricity rates in the province of Ontario have increased by 15.7%. To put this into perspective, the proposed 8% reduction of hydro bills represents only one half of last year's increases alone. The government's solution—a Band-Aid on a large open wound—does nothing to address the more fundamental failings of a broken hydro system.

In a report issued in 2015, the Auditor General of Ontario stated that the government ignored the Ontario Power Authority's 20-year technical plan, a plan reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board. That plan, she said, would have offered protection to consumers. Instead of following the established, legislated process, policy plans and 93 directives were issued that the auditor said did not fully consider the state of the electricity market, did not take long-term effects fully into account and sometimes went against the Ontario Power Authority's advice. "Ontario electricity ratepayers have had to pay billions for these decisions," she said—billions, Speaker.

We have systemic problems with our hydro system, problems that completely overshadow the weak attempt at solving them, as evidenced by the simple elimination of the PST on hydro bills. It hardly seems reasonable that a throne speech became the tool of choice, offering such a weak solution for a problem so deep-rooted and, for all of our constituents, so real.

Energy costs will continue to rise because of the government's cap-and-trade cash grab. The government's plan is the definition of a shell game. The money simply goes in one pocket and comes out the other. The same day that the Liberal government will claim to save Ontarians money on their hydro bills, the cap-and-trade cash grab comes into effect, at a cost of \$156 a year per family.

The Liberals have only offered band-aid solutions for hard-working Ontario families in energy poverty, and that's really clear. It's clear to me every day when I'm in my constituency office listening to families pour out their heart about the struggles that they have with high electricity rates in this province.

What's also clear is that rates will continue to skyrocket and life will become even more unaffordable and tougher under the Liberals. Life is tougher under the Liberals. At the same time, the Liberal government is burying the costs of cap-and-trade on consumers' natural gas and home heating bills. This government only ever looks out for their political self-interest.

It's not just hydro where the waste and mismanagement by this government is evident. You'll realize that over the past month and a half I've been travelling the province, visiting colleges and universities, engaging in trade sectors as part of my portfolio as the official opposition critic for advanced education and skills development. What's clear out of those discussions is that the skills gap in this province continues to grow.

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The people of Ontario I speak with want action. Parents want to know, rightly, that their sons and daughters can leave university, college or an apprenticeship with a chance to start a career and an opportunity to succeed. Employers complain that they can't find prospective employees with the right qualifications. We hear from youth, as I did on campuses, that they don't have the skills for the jobs that are available. We have to do better and we can do better.

It's time for this government to take real action and stop graduating people for yesterday's jobs. Yet the speech from the throne did not have any measures to address the province's skills mismatch—none whatsoever. According to the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario's skills shortage has cost the economy up to \$24.3 billion in foregone GDP and \$3.7 billion in provincial tax revenues annually. In my view, we need to be relentless in lifting students' sights and raising their hopes. We can do better.

Meanwhile, this government continues to neglect some of our province's most vulnerable. There is no mention of autism funding or of demonstration and provincial schools in the government's priorities, Speaker. You will know that we've had ample conversation on both topics, and you participated in that debate, as well.

What's clear is that the Ontario PC caucus will continue to hold this government to account to ensure that children reach their full potential. We also expect the Liberal government to ensure schools for deaf, blind and learning-disabled children remain open past the 2016-17 school year and that funding for autism therapy for children older than five is restored.

What's clear is that this government's moment has come and gone. It's too little, too late. Ontario families will continue to see their hydro bills get more expensive. Every failed policy decision the Wynne Liberals have made over the last 13 years has made life harder and more unaffordable for Ontarians, and no throne speech is going to change that.

Due to a third consecutive by-election loss, the Liberal government has attempted to reset its priorities to benefit only the Ontario Liberal Party, not hard-working Ontario families. Families in Whitby–Oshawa and, most recently, Scarborough–Rouge River have had enough. They want to see a government that listens and takes real action on their priorities—their main priority, in particular, of high electricity rates—not a tired and self-serving government that has lost its moral compass.

I will conclude with an excerpt from a recent Globe and Mail editorial: "By the time the next provincial election rolls around, the Liberals will have been in

power for a decade and a half. Having done experimental surgery on the electricity system, they have no idea of how to cage their Frankenstein creation. So instead of fixing the fiasco, they are going to once again pay voters with their own money into not noticing it.”

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I see the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I was partly asleep, Speaker, although I was listening intently to most of the member's speech. Thursday afternoons are tough, even when we have an important issue like this, even with the throne speech of the century.

Obviously, I was listening to him, the member's comments that the PC caucus and our caucus definitely agree that this wasn't Her Majesty's throne speech. This was a throne speech to change the channel because it really only said one thing: “We're going to give you a re-election rebate on your hydro bill.”

Considering that the last throne speech was all about openness and transparency, they didn't bother saying in the re-election rebate part about how, in a few months, delivery charges are going to change again in rural Ontario, and for those people who now face the incredible problem of their delivery charges being higher than their actual energy consumption, that's going to get worse. That's going to get worse, Speaker. For some of those people, their hydro bills are going to go up 10% because of increased delivery charges. I didn't hear that in the open and transparent re-throne speech. I didn't hear it yesterday or the day before—I can't remember which date. I was listening to the member I pay a lot of attention to, the Minister of Agriculture, when he was saying all the benefits for agriculture and for rural Ontario. I didn't hear him say, “Oh, yeah, but wait. The cap-and-trade and this delivery change are actually going to make the bills for a lot of people in rural Ontario—it's actually going to be more expensive than it was before the reboot.” I didn't hear that. And that's a problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to stand up and respond to the member's remarks on the throne speech. I'm impressed at the fact that although so many of the members so far have been commenting particularly—and this member did to some extent—dwelling on the fact, this myth, that this whole reboot comes as a result of a by-election loss. That's just simply not the case. We know that the Minister of Energy has been working on this file all summer long, working diligently and very hard to find—because we have been listening to Ontarians all through the summer break and before.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition say the other day how in previous administrations our finance minister might have called taking off the HST a reckless move, and this looks like some kind of a change. But those are different circumstances. At a time when the government of Ontario had a revenue crisis, it may have been a reckless move. But at a time when we're on a balanced budget trajectory, where we've got our expenditures

under control in a manner that we know we can deliver next year a balanced budget, then recognizing the HST on an essential service such as hydro isn't reckless anymore. It's actually a timely, prudent move which gives fundamental relief to Ontarians across the board.

We can belittle the fact that it's only 8%, and maybe the members opposite would like to give twice the HST back. Maybe that's their policy, but we haven't heard a lot about what their policy would be on this. Well, I'm proud of the fact that not only is it 8% across the board, recognizing that we shouldn't have HST on essential goods, as we don't on food, for instance, and we shouldn't have it on electricity—I think that's a policy we know is going to be enshrined, that it's not the right place—but we're also giving that additional money and giving additional help to people in rural Ontario who do face increased pressures because they don't have the opportunity to be on gas and benefit from our government's carriage of that—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: We keep hearing about this reset, proroguing Parliament. Nobody talks about how much money we've wasted, that we have to reintroduce all the bills, debate all the bills. The Clerk's office, all the different staff that work here at Queen's Park, have to research and present and enter into Hansard, and there's all the video and media work that goes into all these bills that have to be redone. What a waste.

We hear that the government is building Ontario up. All we see that's going up is the hydro rates in this province. The C.D. Howe Institute made it very clear with their data this week that the rising hydro rates are almost entirely due to increased generation costs and not due, or in a very minor way, to improvements to the grids. We all knew coal was already being phased out as we, the PC Party, had been the ones to close the first coal plant in the province.

I want to talk about a very specific family in my riding. Sabrina has four children, and her son is on an oxygen machine, a feeding tube, a monitor, a suction machine. He has a special medical fridge. She has disability that barely covers diapers and other expenses for her son who has so many medical challenges. She's seeing a huge increase in her electricity costs due to all of this equipment.

She called the Ministry of Health, and they said she should speak to PowerStream. PowerStream says there's nothing that they can do. They don't qualify for OESP. They paid the bill of \$863.17 this month and they were unable to buy their other three children new shoes for school.

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That's the reality in Thornhill. That's a middle-income family that can't afford—even with some government assistance—the high electricity costs of their son's medical equipment.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Before I comment on Mr. Coe's speech, I just need to correct my record. Earlier today, when I was talking about the bill that was brought forward by the Minister of Energy, I said that it was hard to "understate" the cynicism of this government when it came to hydro prices, and I meant to say "overstate" the cynicism. I just want to make sure that that's clear.

The speech by Mr. Coe was a good speech, I have to say. I actually agree with him. I don't think there's anything mythological about the Liberals having an electoral disaster and deciding to do something. That's the way this place works. I've been here 10 years, on a regular basis. If they think they're going to win a seat or lose a seat, stuff happens. It doesn't happen otherwise. They lost the seat; they've got to do something.

Interestingly, the member for Thornhill was talking about a family dealing with the price of medical equipment—an oxygen machine, breathing apparatus. When I was canvassing in my riding just last week, I came across a woman—in her late sixties, I would say—who was very interested in my flyer about the privatization of Hydro One. She brought me into her house, pointed to her oxygen machine and said, "I've got to have this to live, but these machines dry you out. I have to have a humidifier going at the same time. My hydro bill is about 700 bucks a month. Is there anyone out there who can help me? Is there any medical exemption that will allow me to deal with this necessity of actually living and breathing?" I told her what limited help there was, but the reality is that for many, many people, prices that this government has set in motion as being far beyond what's needed are profoundly problematic.

I'll get a chance to speak further when my time comes up.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Whitby–Oshawa to wrap up.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I thank the members from Thornhill, Beaches–East York and Toronto–Danforth for their comments, in the spirit of cordiality of the Legislature. I appreciate that from time to time the debate in the Legislature can become heated, but I feel that today, even though we don't have a predominance, the comments that I heard in terms of the response to my speech were provided in a spirit of cordiality and feelings with respect to the issue we're talking about, and that is the throne speech and what it has and what it lacks from what we need going forward to help people succeed and provide them with the type of hope they deserve.

What's also clear is that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has called on the Liberal government to take HST off hydro bills for years. That's a fact. Now we have the Wynne Liberals wanting to take credit for this, after Ontario families and businesses have been struggling with hydro rates for over a decade.

Two weeks ago now, my leader, Patrick Brown, and myself participated in an afternoon question-and-answer session with the Whitby Chamber of Commerce. Many of the businesses that were there related stories in terms of the type of challenges that they're facing day in and

day out trying to succeed here in the province of Ontario. At the end of the day, we concluded that the type of conditions that they need to succeed are not in place, and we need to do more here in the province to help them succeed. And I believe we can.

In closing, on child care spaces—I know I only have a few seconds left—they've made it harder—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm sorry. Thank you. I'm very sorry.

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Good afternoon, Speaker. Oh, my gosh, it's my first long debate here, other than giving some questions and comments. I am thrilled to be here.

I also think that I should acknowledge a very special guest this afternoon who has come all the way from London, Susan Smith, because she realizes the importance of a throne speech. She's here to listen to our debate, and she probably was hoping—

Applause.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We should clap for her. Yes, we should. I suspect she was hoping to hear some debate on the throne speech from some of the Liberal members, but I don't know as of yet if Susan will have that opportunity to hear from all sides of this House and every party's take and opinion on this throne speech. We're in suspense, Speaker, whether or not they'll have that contribution made today.

I am pleased to rise today and speak to the throne speech. This speech was this government's attempt to, of course, reset their priorities for the next 20 months, and many have come to understand it as a desperate ploy to distract Ontarians from their failures—that's what people are saying out there—failure to protect our publicly owned assets, failure to protect against staggering hydro bills, and failure to take action to make life more affordable for those we are here to help.

I and my New Democratic colleagues are going to make sure that this session is about action. We are going to push this government to take action rather than just talk. People need more action and much less talk and hyperbole, and they need that help now and today. People don't trust these new promises because they are rooted in the Premier's desire to help herself, not the people; and worse, they have little to do with the best interests of Ontarians. In fact, the Wynne Liberals had no need to call for prorogation of the Legislature. All it takes to earn back the trust of Ontarians is to actually care for people and improve their lives. For all of your announcements, most Ontarians don't believe their lives are better off with this Liberal Wynne government at the helm.

For our part, my colleagues and I have spent the past year trying to make you understand the harm and the damage inflicted on Ontario families. Simply ask the parents and autistic children who have had to fight tooth and nail to stop you from cancelling their IBI therapies.

Recently, in a Toronto Star article, it was reported that:

"The province stood firmly behind its controversial plan to stop funding intensive autism treatment for

children five and older last spring—even as its own expert advisory panel cautioned the move would be detrimental to vulnerable kids....

"The committee stated in its letter to Minister MacCharles that the government's autism plan 'is not in keeping with the report recommendations as a whole.'

"Other concerns highlighted in the letter include:

"—The autism program was 'initiated prematurely, without sufficient consultation' with families, schools, professionals and the committee and should have been developed and tested first, perhaps as a pilot project.

"—The committee's report cited by the ministry did not propose imposing an age cut-off. Instead, it envisioned an IBI program refocused on children ages two to four only if there were ample supports for older children provided in schools and through an enhanced version of the Ontario's applied behaviour analysis (ABA) program."

Speaker, the same was true for parents and children at Ontario provincial demonstration schools. Once again families, children, educators and supporters descended on Queen's Park for a massive protest rally to demand that the schools for the deaf and the blind students and those with severe learning disabilities stay open.

One of the concerned parents that I had the pleasure of meeting was Katrina Elshami, whose son attends the Amethyst Demonstration School in my hometown of London. She said of the Minister of Education, "She's just trying to throw us a bone to see if we'll quiet down and go away.... And we're not going to go away." Those families and children came here several times to force the Wynne government to reverse its wrong-headed decision.

We can also look to seniors to see the real hypocrisy of this Liberal government and its lack of values. I'll give you an example, Speaker. In the 2016 budget, the Premier indicated that she was planning to increase the deductible for most seniors from \$100 to \$170 and have their copayments rise as well. It was understandable that thousands of seniors and organizations across the province deemed the move entirely unacceptable. It was unfortunate that it took thousands of seniors and more than 80 organizations demanding a reversal before the Premier was willing to admit that she made a mistake.

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Your government is clearly out of touch with the needs of seniors, and suggesting that seniors earning \$19,700 a year could handle a 70% increase in drug copayment costs and prescription fees is proof of that. In fact, this government publicly stated that seniors making more than \$19,700 per year were considered affluent. Then they had the audacity to defend the \$4-million-per-year salary of the new hydro CEO merely days later—a \$4-million salary.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's not lifetime; that's per year.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's per year. That's an incredible bonanza for that CEO, so it's not surprising that this Premier is desperately trying to turn the page on her policy bumbles.

If it's true that a society is judged by how we treat our most vulnerable, then this government will be judged most severely indeed. You have cost taxpayers billions of dollars in scandal after scandal. Then you stand here and talk about the balanced plan to build Ontario up for everyone. Trust me, the irony of that title is not lost on anyone in this House today. Premier Wynne, in her remarks, noted that, "Many in our province are seeing the benefits of economic growth but ... some have yet to share in Ontario's resurgence." I think it's most important that we take a moment to reflect on who exactly has benefited from Premier Wynne's economic growth, because we sure know who hasn't: seniors, small business owners, everyday families, and it certainly isn't our nurses or front-line service providers. It certainly isn't our First Nations communities living with poisoned drinking water. The Wynne Liberals have prioritized themselves and their Bay Street donors at the expense of everyone else.

I am deeply concerned about the increasing lack of confidence in our political system. It's time to get the influence of big money out of government and politics at all levels. Many people in my riding are disillusioned with the political system because of the kind of policies that aren't working for them. One of them—and we're going to hear this over and over again—is the increase in hydro rates, which are crippling households.

How we approach the meaningful electoral reform is vital to the success of the task at hand. We must be transparent and non-partisan and include substantive input from the public, NGOs, academia, labour, business and all major political and interested parties. But Premier Wynne's approach has been to write the legislation before the consultation. It's no wonder people are disheartened when this Liberal government takes something as important as changing the rules of our democracy and turns it into a farce with a predetermined outcome that coerces public consultation into little more than a public relations exercise.

This government has taken full advantage of pay-to-play special-access fundraisers, no-limits advertising, and restricted public participation through limited non-partisan advertising. While Ontario's Integrity Commissioner ruled that the ministers involved had not broken the Legislature's integrity rules because they had not benefited personally from the fundraiser because the money raised went to the Liberal Party and not into their personal pockets, Mr. Wake did, however, urge the Legislature to clarify its rules around conflicts of interest in light of the event. He went on to say:

"It is conceivable that a reasonably well-informed person could have reasonable concerns about a \$7,500 per person fundraising event, held one month after the conclusion of a significant transaction, chaired and attended largely by individuals affiliated with organizations that benefited from that transaction."

I don't know what happened to the sound system, Speaker, but I kind of liked it.

But there you go. There's Mr. Wake saying that a reasonable person would have likely questioned a

fundraiser of \$7,500 which has people that have access to that minister, who have an affiliation with that decision, right? This is exactly the kind of behaviour that has turned the public sentiment against this government. Like my colleague from Essex said, "My solution is to fire the Liberal government, to get Kathleen Wynne out of here." He isn't the first to express that sentiment either. That sentiment is being echoed throughout the province. People are fed up with the policies of this Wynne government.

In responding to your throne speech, Smokey Thomas from the Public Service Employees Union said we don't need a reboot; we need to give Wynne the boot. Because, again, you've failed. You've failed in this throne speech to address the needs of the average person in this province.

My hometown of London is a great example. Our mayor's office created an advisory panel on poverty. The panel prepared a final report called London For All: A Roadmap to End Poverty. This report showed London's current poverty rate to be 17%, a number that eclipses provincial poverty levels by far.

Despite the best efforts of many, the barriers to eradicate poverty stubbornly persist, and yet the city of London is still committed to that goal of ending poverty in one generation. I was inspired by the tenor and the urgency of their determination. While some believe the goal of ending poverty in one generation is a lofty one, I believe that it is possible, and I am not alone.

I did find it very interesting that the report used similar language to the Premier. Here's the quote from the report that I wanted to share: "And, while it's true that our economy has exhibited promising signs of recovery, that recovery has still not reached our most vulnerable citizens." That was the poverty report from London. Here's the Premier's quote from Monday: "Many in our province are seeing the benefits of economic growth but, as I said, some have yet to share in Ontario's resurgence."

Speaker, I like the similarities, but I want to point out that, with fewer resources, the city of London has shown greater courage when tackling the tough issues than this government has. They know it won't be easy. They know that they are vastly underfunded for the task. They know that they have many other pressing issues before them, yet they refuse to hide behind the excuse any longer. They are shining a light on it, and they are making it a priority, yet this throne speech refuses to tackle the real challenges of those left behind.

My NDP colleagues and I continue to undertake the effort this government won't. For example, 5% of Londoners are considered working poor. Establishing a living wage for the working poor in this province has been a top priority for our party. We believe that nobody who works full-time should live in poverty. That's a simple truth, one that could have easily been included by Premier Wynne in her throne speech, but she refused to do so.

We know that today in Ontario, there's a growing gap between those who are getting ahead and those who are

being left behind. For our part, we collaborated with an Ontario-wide coalition of over 90 labour and community groups, and what we've been warning for years was confirmed: that Ontario is the last when it comes to jobs, social programs and income equality, and that Ontario has the lowest social program spending per capita, and long-term unemployment is one of the worst in the country.

My party is standing hand in hand with organizations across the province who have come together demanding action to increase standards for workers, starting with those living below the poverty line. Every worker in this province deserves a fair wage and a decent living. That's why the NDP has been calling for that \$15 minimum wage now. By working together, we can encourage employers to recognize the value of paying a living wage and the benefit it will have within our communities.

We can immediately improve the lives of the working poor in Ontario by agreeing to support a \$15 minimum wage now. If we start talking about it today, maybe the next government—hopefully it is the NDP—will be able to implement that. If it's not the NDP, it might take 10 years before the next government wakes up to see that benefit of people not living in poverty while they're working.

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Instead, Ontarians are desperate for a government that respects our municipalities and that will protect and restore our public assets. In London, small and medium-sized businesses have told me that increasing hydro rates have created great concern for their future. The Ontario Energy Board shows that the number of people behind on their payments to London Hydro climbed from 11,077 customers in 2013 to 11,404 in 2014 and 12,406 last year. Our residential rates have increased by 56% over the last 10 years, and of those people in arrears, the amounts due are higher overall.

The Ontario Auditor General reported that Ontarians paid \$37 billion more than the market price for electricity over the previous decade and will pay an estimated \$133 billion extra over the next 16 years because the provincial government ignored recommendations from their own experts.

Our neighbours in Manitoba and Quebec pay half the hydro costs that we do here in Ontario. We are using less electricity, but for the eighth year in a row people will see the cost of hydro increase by more than 9%. London families and businesses are desperate for immediate relief. According to the chamber of commerce, high energy costs are expected to force one in 20 businesses to close in the next five years. Taking the HST off hydro isn't enough, especially when it never should have been there in the first place. I find it ironic, Speaker, when we're talking today about taking the HST off, that the Liberals put the HST on it in the first place and now they're championing taking it off. It doesn't bode well, Speaker.

After listening to the throne speech, I can tell you that New Democrats will keep working for real action that people need to see in health care, hydro, jobs and all the

priorities that matter the most to the people of Ontario because it's clear that Premier Wynne and this government aren't up to the challenge. It isn't working. They say they're listening, but it's very evident that they're not listening.

Members have said this before. The only time this government listens is when their power is going to be taken away from them. We have an example like that with the Oakville-Mississauga gas plants. The community was saying that those gas plants were in the wrong location. They only did a 360 when they realized they were going to lose those two seats. Power is what talks to the Liberal government.

They've lost the by-election, and that speaks to them. They lost that long-time Liberal seat—gone, pulled out from them. Now they're listening, Speaker. That's not how a government should listen. A government should listen, first, to their constituents and then to the opposition and the third party, because we've been speaking about these issues for a very long time. They're real to our constituents and they're real to us. We bring these stories to the Legislature just so this government can pay attention. The arrogance has to stop. They have to bring that barrier down, work with the opposition and the third party and listen to us, because we're not here just to give you a hard time, which is part of our work. We like to do that some days, but we are also here to help create good policy and legislation because that's what the people of our ridings sent us here to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Once again I am pleased to be able to stand and make a few comments about this week's speech from the throne, A Balanced Plan to Build Ontario Up for Everyone.

When last I made some comments, I spoke about the expansion of the industrial conservation initiative. I just wanted to touch base on that again because, in my mind and through my experience, it's a clear demonstration that this government has been listening to industry. We have been listening to business. We have been listening to residents and, certainly, to constituents who have said that it's really important that we continue to build Ontario up by supporting our manufacturing base.

People in my riding of Newmarket-Aurora are very excited with the fact that we've expanded that Industrial Conservation Initiative, providing savings of up to 34%, depending on a company's ability to reduce peak-electricity consumption.

But as the saying goes, "Wait, there's more." One of the other things that I'm hearing since the throne speech was the increase of the additional 100,000 licensed spaces within the next five years for affordable child care. This is something that this government has heard and has acted on. We have been listening to parents and to educators talk about the need for more affordable child care, and we are acting on that. Clearly, we listened, we heard, we acted.

I can carry on. There are so many more things. In my area of Newmarket-Aurora, what we have listened to and

what we are actively acting on is transportation infrastructure, namely GO trains and GO buses. We heard from people that they needed improved GO train service to improve their lives, and we are delivering it. Speaker, we listen; we act.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the debate that the member from London-Fanshawe did—excellent speaking notes. I don't pretend to know or understand who wrote the Liberal throne speech that we heard on Monday, but there were at least half a dozen items that the member from London-Fanshawe raised in her 20-minute speech that would have been a very good starting point for a throne speech—demonstration schools, autism—none of which was mentioned in the throne speech.

If you actually wanted to react and respond to what people are talking about and what people are concerned about—absolutely, hydro rates are number one. But the member from London-Fanshawe, who for a little while there we heard in stereo and she still had some excellent points, raised some things that she has been hearing, obviously, when she goes back and represents her riding, but we've all heard collectively.

I question why you would go through this sham of drafting and preparing and asking the LG to present, and yet you didn't actually hit the mark. You had an opportunity when you decided to prorogue and hit that reset. You had an opportunity to actually change direction and focus on the things that the people of Ontario want to hear their government are listening to and dealing with. The points that the member from London-Fanshawe was making raised some of those. Unfortunately, the throne speech did not.

You had that opportunity. We talk about missed opportunities in politics and as elected officials. I think on Friday, when you prorogued, and on Monday, when we had the throne speech, there was a grave missed opportunity there, and to think—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I as well listened intently to my colleague from London-Fanshawe and her comments on the throne speech, and they were very well researched. I would agree with—I think she's even my colleague now; we've done a lot of work in the last couple of days—that there were a lot of points in—no? Where are you from, anyway, Sylvia?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin-Caledon.

Mr. John Vanthof: Dufferin-Caledon.

I agree that the member from London-Fanshawe brought up a lot of points that could have been in a substantive throne speech. It really raises the question: If it wasn't to change the channel, why did you bother? Why did the brain trust behind the Wynne government bother with the throne speech? Because there was nothing in that throne speech that couldn't have been done in the same session.

1640

We heard a member across the way. He was so happy about the 100,000 extra child care spaces—I think that's great—within the next five years. How many within the next two, which is actually the mandate of the government? Saying you're going to have 100,000 in five could be 5,000 in the actual mandate of the government and then 95,000 after the government is gone.

It didn't say anything about whether these child care spaces are actually going to be affordable. If you're lifting Ontario up for everyone, you would want to make sure that these child care spaces are affordable. It didn't say anything about that. But the main point is, why did you even need one? You could have done everything you said you were going to do with the old, open and transparent throne speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. It's my first time speaking after a long break, so I'm a little rusty. I just want to take this opportunity to recall what a privilege it always is to have this microphone. We were reminded of that by the former Leader of the Opposition today, so I want to take this opportunity to speak up about the throne speech.

I want to begin by responding to the comments by the member from Dufferin—Caledon. She was talking—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Proudly from Dufferin—Caledon.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: —proudly from Dufferin—Caledon—because she was talking about missed opportunities. I can't help but reflect on the fact that the real missed opportunity was for that party in this by-election, to actually come out and say what they really stand for on many of the issues that are really, really important to Ontarians.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: How can it be a missed opportunity? We won.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Well, I want to take nothing away from the new member from Scarborough—Rouge River, but I think he won in spite of you guys, not because of you. That's my personal opinion.

But anyway, coming back to the throne speech: The reason I made that comment was because this was our opportunity to actually talk about what we stand for. I think this Premier has always been consistent in what we, the Ontario Liberals, stand for. I think that is really important, because if you don't know what you stand for, if you're consistently flipping and flopping and then saying, "I didn't know what my party stood for and I didn't know what letter went out," well, that speaks to the quality of leadership, I think.

So I think we have to look at the throne speech through the prism of how this is a Premier who has consistently said she stands for social justice. This, once again, was a throne speech that spoke to that essential idea of social justice, whether it was child care spaces or making electricity more affordable for Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We turn back to the member from London—Fanshawe to wrap up.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to thank the member from Dufferin—Caledon, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, the Minister of Housing responsible for the poverty reduction strategy and the minister responsible for seniors.

It is truly a privilege to stand here and bring the voices of our constituents to this Legislature. My hope, as I'm the MPP for London—Fanshawe, is that I will be able to bring the voices here, as I've always done, but bring some context for this government to listen to those voices, so that we can have changes that can happen before they realize that it's not about power and losing elections; it's about working every day so that you can improve the lives of people, and you're not going to finally wake up when there's a by-election loss and then come to the Legislature and prorogue in order to, as the member said, let people know what they stand for.

I think people already know what you stand for as a party, if the election was in 2014. They know what you stand for because of the policy, the legislation and the bills that you passed.

One of the policies that people know that they don't like and that they're very opposed to is selling off hydro and having their electricity rates go up. That's what people are feeling that this government stands for: selling off public assets. That means that in the future we won't have that revenue from that public asset to pay for our hospitals, to pay for our education and to pay for our infrastructure. It's a desperate move, it doesn't make sense and people don't want that to happen. If you wanted to listen to people, 80% of the public said, "Don't sell off hydro."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to deliver my inaugural speech in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Before doing that, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all members in this chamber for such a warm welcome. Thank you very much.

Fifty years ago, when I came to this great country of Canada, my first job was dishwasher, then miner, then janitor. Today I'm here in this chamber as the elected member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity again to thank all of the voters and residents of Scarborough—Rouge River who elected me and sent me to this historical building.

It is my honour to represent the people of my riding. For 25 years, I worked tirelessly for Scarborough as a city councillor, and I will do the same as MPP for the next 25 years.

Madam Speaker, in this election, the voters sent the Liberal government a strong message: They are tired of skyrocketing hydro rates. There are many episodes I could mention, but I'll just mention one incident. I met a Chinese Canadian woman—she looked like she was in her forties or fifties—at the door, and she said, "Council-

lor Cho, I'm really mad." "How come you're mad? Mad at whom?" "I'm really mad at this provincial government. My hydro bill goes up every month. I cannot even go shopping. I don't have money." That's the sentiment from Scarborough.

They're angry about the cost of health care, and I will elaborate on what that means. They are frustrated at the lack of job opportunities. They are sick of being promised subways, only to have those promises broken.

Because of the Liberal government's total mismanagement, waste and scandal after scandal for the past 13 years, Ontario's debt has reached \$308 billion. This government spends \$1 billion of taxpayers' money every month only to pay for the interest. Around election time, I read the Toronto Star editorial—and in four years' time, this debt could grow to \$350 billion. With my simple mathematics—I'm not very good—every year it goes up \$12 billion. What kind of management do we have with this government? It's really concerning. With that \$12 billion a year, Scarborough could build a subway on Sheppard, build a new hospital, increase more long-term-care homes for seniors and build more affordable housing.

The residents of Scarborough–Rouge River sent me here with a strong and clear mandate to fight for the needs of Scarborough, to ensure they are no longer ignored by this Liberal government. It appeared that their third by-election loss in a year opened the Premier's eyes to the urgent crisis that the skyrocketing hydro rates are creating for families.

With that in mind, I listened to the Liberal government's speech from the throne with interest. I know that following a third consecutive by-election loss, the Premier said she wanted to focus on the priorities of Ontarians. I was looking forward to hearing what she had to say. Unfortunately, I was very disappointed that it appears the Premier once again forgot about Scarborough.

1650

There is nothing in the throne speech about this government's recommitment to the Scarborough subway. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. After 13 years of broken Liberal promises, nothing has been done to address Scarborough's transit needs. Today, they continue to delay the Sheppard LRT. In fact, the capital budget allocated to build the Sheppard subway is all reallocated outside Scarborough. We don't even have any capital budget. No plan.

Scarborough–Rouge River remains forgotten by the Wynne Liberals. It takes approximately \$1 billion to build one kilometre of subway line. If the Liberal government did not waste \$1 billion each month just to pay for the interest on Ontario's debt, we could have built approximately 12 kilometres of subway line each year.

I'd like to present another real example as to how Scarborough has been ignored. In North York, north of Highway 401, there are 15 subway stations including a new subway station coming soon—the new subway line that goes to Vaughan. They're bringing a subway to Vaughan. What's the population there?

How many subway stations do we have in Scarborough, north of the 401? None. Perhaps I should say, "Thank you, Liberal government, for keeping on ignoring Scarborough." The Premier must commit to extending the subway north of the 401 in Scarborough so that it actually reaches my riding.

There was also no mention of addressing auto insurance rates, despite the Liberals not meeting their commitment to roll back insurance rates by 15%. It's unfair that the residents in Scarborough–Rouge River pay more simply because they live in Scarborough. We have among the highest rates in Ontario. This is on top of Ontario having the highest rates in Canada. This is nothing but added costs for families who view owning a car as an essential. The residents in my riding have to rely on their cars simply because there's no rapid transit in Scarborough–Rouge River. It takes at least one and a half hours to reach downtown. They have to spend three to four hours to commute to and fro between work and home—four hours a day, every day. Yet, we see no meaningful action from this government to help reduce this added burden on families.

Scarborough's health care needs were also ignored. There's no commitment to reduce the nearly three-year wait at Extendicare Rouge Valley. There is nothing to shorten the seven-year placement time at the Hellenic Home for the Aged in Scarborough, zero commitment to reduce the eight-year wait at Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care and there was no mention of addressing the overcrowding at Scarborough's Rouge Valley Centenary site.

Just one week before the last provincial election, I had the privilege to visit Scarborough Rouge Valley Health System. I was totally shocked to see the overcrowded ER of the Centenary hospital. So many patients were lying down in beds that filled the whole hallway. I was listening to one senior staff and she told me, "Councillor Cho"—I was still a councillor at that time—"you know our ER space, compared to downtown and North York? They are 20 times bigger downtown and in North York than in the Scarborough hospital."

What kind of treatment do we get? They just take Scarborough for granted. They think Scarborough will remain red forever. We changed the red to blue.

According to the CEO of the Rouge Valley hospital, the ER of the hospital was designed in 1973 to treat 20,000 patients annually. Today the ER of the hospital is treating 65,000 patients a year. And yet, there is no capital budget in sight. That kind of treatment, Scarborough has been getting year after year.

This is the result of Liberal cuts and the underfunding of our health care system. Until this is addressed, patients in Scarborough and, of course, the province will continue to suffer.

Madam Speaker, I urge this government to show it has learned its lesson from the Scarborough–Rouge River by-election. We can no longer be ignored. No more band-aid solutions. Ontarians are saying enough is enough. They want to see a government that listens and takes real action.

If I may, I've been elected eight times, because I was honest and I listened to the people who voted for me and tried to fix their problems. When we work together, it's a much, much better community. Either you listen to your voters, or you don't listen to the voters and you could suffer the consequences. The option is the Premier's.

As MPP, I will continue to fight for my community and fight against a self-interested government that is only in it for themselves.

The most outstanding message I have heard repeatedly from lots and lots of people from Scarborough–Rouge River during this by-election campaign is, "It's time for change, and the next Ontario government will be and should be a PC government under new Premier Patrick Brown."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It truly is an honour to make comments on the inaugural speech from the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

He talked a lot about his riding. He talked passionately about the issues that are important to his riding. I think most of us, during that campaign, worked in Scarborough–Rouge River. For me and, I think, for many, it was an incredible opportunity, because I'm from northern Ontario, very far from Scarborough–Rouge River. But it amazed me that although the problems were different, the concerns—we have concerns with transportation and transit, not because we're having more people, but in northern Ontario, it seems the government is forgetting that even where there's less population, people still need transit. It's a different concern than yours—different reasons—but the concern is the same. The hydro concern is certainly the same.

It was an incredible opportunity for me to understand. When I come from northern Ontario, I come to Queen's Park. I come to downtown Toronto, and downtown Toronto is certainly different than Scarborough. I felt much more at home in Scarborough. I had lots of language barriers, as we have in my riding, with French and English, Ojibway and Cree. We have language barriers in my riding. I had language barriers in your riding. It was an incredible opportunity.

I commend the member for winning an election. I totally disagree with him on who is going to be the next Premier. I think we agree that it shouldn't be on that side, the current one. But I commend the member for winning that election for his team, and I am hopeful that we will be able to work together for the residents of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

1700

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm happy to welcome my former city of Toronto colleague to Queen's Park, the former councillor Cho, now MPP for Scarborough–Rouge River. I'm happy that he was listening very carefully to the throne speech. I want to highlight one thing that he felt wasn't clear enough in there, which in fact was. What was very clear was this government's

commitment to \$160 billion of infrastructure, which includes guaranteed funding for the Scarborough subway.

Now, what might be a little bit difficult for me to reconcile with the member's speech is that I have a very good memory. I shared some very good times in the city of Toronto council chamber with that member when he voted against a Scarborough subway. The by-election campaign manager's brother, who was a former mayor of Toronto, and the member fought against the mayor of Toronto, who wanted a Scarborough subway. My votes on a Scarborough subway have been consistent over the years. That's why I was happy to run on this side of the aisle and be part of a government that's committed to building a subway, because I have always been committed to that project. But I'm happy that the member for Scarborough–Rouge River is so committed to that project. Since he's been at the city longer than me, he needs to go back to our friends at city hall and tell them they have to get on the ball to get that project running. They decide the alignment. They do the design. This government will pay for it. We have always said that we have, and we will.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise after my new colleague from Scarborough–Rouge River—la rivière bleue. It is now. I remember meeting a gentleman at the door when I was canvassing in Scarborough during the last by-election who said to me, "Come inside, come inside." And I wasn't going to go inside his house. I said, "Well, sir, why would you like me to go inside the house?" And he says, "I want you to see how hot it is in here. We can't afford to turn on the air conditioning." And it was one of those days I think we all know very well where it was humid and about 30 degrees.

This is the reality. These are people who own their own homes and they're afraid to turn on the air conditioner. They're going to be afraid to turn on the heat in the winter. And those are the lucky ones, the ones who can actually manage to pay their hydro bills even if they don't put on the electricity, because we know that there are people who are actually in energy poverty who don't even have air conditioners in this province.

We heard the member speak about the Vaughan subway. Well, that Vaughan subway is delayed year after year. I feel like asking the Minister of Education how much money has been spent on new stickers to slap on the walls surrounding where the subway is being built, saying, "Subway opening 2015—whoops, 2016—whoops, 2017." It's depressing.

I think what the public feels is that they pay their taxes. They pay their municipal taxes, provincial taxes, federal taxes, sales tax, gas tax. They're paying taxes and it's still not enough. They're seeing their beloved Hydro One being sold to pay for the things that they thought their taxes were going to go for and they still feel that even with their high taxation, they're not getting value. They're not getting value from the government in terms of health care, education, transit and infrastructure. I think that's the crux of the matter and I think that that's

where the throne speech this week failed: It really didn't address the fact that we don't need to sell Hydro One. We just need to be more efficient.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to extend a welcome to the new member here from Scarborough–Rouge River. Congratulations on your win. It's kind of bittersweet, maybe, for the Liberals to have the member here because of the fact they held that seat for so long. And then we have the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore letting you know about your history and your voting record on specific issues. Welcome to the Legislature. You can expect a lot more of that kind of banter back and forth, but it's in a healthy form.

We have to remind each other of the way we voted when we put the HST on heating and hydro. We have to remind the Liberals that they're the ones that put the HST on there first, and now they're championing taking it off. What a world—what a Legislature—that we live in.

Speaker, there is also a petition online. It's kind of humorous and comical in a lot of ways, because the Liberals are asking you to sign their petition to lower hydro rates.

Mr. John Vanthof: To petition the government.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, to petition themselves to lower hydro rates. I don't know if you've seen it. It's in the Huffington Post. There's a link on it. You can click on there and you can sign your name to it and ask the government, ask your fellow colleagues, to lower hydro rates. This is the nature of this Legislature. It's a little wild at times.

The important piece is that your constituents have elected you to be their voice, and it's your duty, of course, and your responsibility to bring their voices here, as we all have, and make sure the government pays attention to their needs. So welcome, and I look forward to hearing you debate in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River to wrap up.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to make a little correction here. The last time I was running as a PC MPP candidate, I fought for the Scarborough subway.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: What about when you were an NDPer?

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: When I was an NDPer? A long time ago, when I was naive, maybe—too idealistic.

Interjections.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I love the NDP—more idealistic, I should say. But I have a broad mind. In my mind, I have everything: NDP, Liberal, PC. But the most mature party to me today is the Ontario PC Party. I don't want to waste too much time.

Two years ago, I fought for the Scarborough subway. Actually, even in Europe, many countries where they have an LRT are now switching to subways. When you

look at the long term, and the population growth explodes, we do need the subways. Subways bring economic development, so it's the best choice. When you look at the population growth in the city of Toronto, a subway is the right thing. I voted last time and I'm going to vote from now on, too. That's my response.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's always a pleasure late on Thursday afternoon to get in the last word of the week—or close to the last word. There's a little time left; I'll get through my comments.

I know, Speaker, that others have had an opportunity to range fairly widely over the speech from the throne. They've touched on a variety of elements: health care, education, the economy, jobs, the budget etc. I may touch on one or two of those in wrapping up my remarks, but I'm going to focus much more closely on the whole question of electricity and electricity pricing, and I'm going to make some comments on the climate change elements in this throne speech.

Before I go further, though, I want to speak about the way this debate is unfolding. It's intriguing to me that the Liberals are not taking the opportunities that this debate format gives them to actually speak for 20 minutes to defend their speech from the throne. They have an opportunity to expand on it, to explain, to really talk about what matters to the people of Ontario. It may be that they are being modest. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, they have much to be modest about. Certainly, that's the case with this speech—modest, indeed.

Earlier this afternoon, I had an opportunity to comment briefly on the government's Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016, an item that was anchored in the speech from the throne. Like the Liberals, it is a very modest document. Given the broad range of factors that are driving up hydro prices, the only real element that is coming forward that is of great substance—that the Liberals are trying to correct the damage they've already done—is giving people a rebate equivalent to the provincial portion of the HST on their hydro bills. So I would say that that document, although meagre and thin in its content, does reflect the fear that the Liberals are beginning to feel about their prospects in this province.

1710

You don't really put people in a difficult position for an extended period of time, you don't put them in a situation where it's very difficult for them to pay their bills, you don't put them in a situation where they can't turn on the air conditioning in summer or are very cautious about keeping themselves warm in winter, without creating a fair amount of animosity in a population of—what are we now?—13 or 15 million people in this province. I, frankly, have had the opportunity on very hot days to go door to door in my riding and find people, as the member from Thornhill found, who were sweltering because they couldn't afford to put on their air conditioning. Typically, they tend to be seniors. They're

on pensions, there are a very limited number of dollars available to them, and they are very cautious with them—even, may I say, to the extent that I think there are health issues that they are risking.

This government has engaged in a variety of activities and has made a number of claims with regard to electricity: what it has done in the past, what its record really means, and what it's going to be doing in the days, weeks and months to come. So let's go to their claims. But before we go there, I want to say, Speaker, that any promise to take on hydro costs in this province without in fact stopping the privatization of Hydro One is simply an exercise in futility, because that privatization will undermine all other steps that have to be taken. That privatization will change the dynamics in the workplace, in the marketplace. It will make it very difficult for any province, any government, any administration, to control very large-scale increases in prices.

That Hydro One privatization is reflective of what the Liberals have done with the rest of the electricity sector in Ontario. It's true that it was the Conservatives who started the privatization. It's true that it was the Conservatives who leased out the Bruce nuclear power complex. In doing that, they set in motion a chain of events that has substantially increased hydro bills in Ontario. As I've said in previous speeches, it is very difficult to get a consolidated number on the value of the profit that has been incorporated into our hydro bills. I've tried to read annual statements where possible. I have to admit that I can't read all of them. A number of them are in Japanese. It speaks to the global reach of investors who want to control, really, what is a critical piece of infrastructure, one where one can squeeze an awful lot of money out.

But I would say, at the very least, as opposed to the situation in 1999 before Bruce was let out, that an extra billion dollars has been added to our hydro bills on an annual basis to pay profits—profits that flow far and wide and are a burden on the people of this province.

This government has started a process of privatization of Hydro One which will complement that privatization of power generation here in Ontario. This government was not as crude, perhaps, as the Mike Harris government. They had said that they would keep existing generation assets in public hands—largely true. But they made sure that all new generation was privatized, or at least partially privatized, and so that sector has continued to grow. And frankly, private companies are not shy, quiet, retiring entities when it comes to exercising political muscle in dealing with a provincial government. They are in there pushing for their interests.

As I had the opportunity to comment earlier today about the gas plant scandal, TransCanada PipeLines is a substantial player in the energy field in this province, and frankly, when you look at the e-mails that the Liberal staff and Liberal political personas were sending around about the gas plant scandal, making sure that they didn't offend TransCanada PipeLines was at the core of much of their thinking. Clearly they didn't want to lose an election. That was a big issue. They wanted to save those

four seats, but they sure didn't want to offend the private owners, the private interests in the energy sector here in Ontario. And we can look forward to that with Hydro One. I know the government can say all kinds of things about how they're going to hold the largest single unit of shares, 40% of those shares. They own 70% now. They could hold onto that 70% if they were thoughtful and concerned about the future of Ontario. We will see if, in perceiving the risk to the continuation of their political regime, they decide to pull back on that. We will see. But they have consistently argued, "We can privatize, and we will control prices through the Ontario Energy Board."

I'll have more to say about the Ontario Energy Board in a few minutes, but I want to say this, Speaker: Those who have looked at the history of regulation in other countries would do well to draw lessons from that history. In his very extraordinary book, Robert Caro, writing about the history of Lyndon Baines Johnson in the United States, wrote in his third volume, *Means of Ascent*—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No—Master of the Senate. Thank you. I appreciate the interjection from the member.

Master of the Senate talked about how natural gas interests in Texas were able to get Senator Johnson to crush the regulatory board in the United States that was holding back those natural gas companies from making the full range of profits they wanted. They were able to fundamentally, radically change the administration of that regulator so that those natural gas companies were able to realize the full profit from the sale of their product. They didn't have to bother with some irritating regulator who told them, "No, you can't rob and pillage. You actually have to charge a reasonable price." No, it is entirely possible, when you are powerful enough, to sweep aside a regulator—and I'll talk about the OEB shortly.

In the package that came to us today—again, a package that flowed from the speech from the throne—the legislation, Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016—there are a number of amazing quotes and claims made by the Liberals. First of all, they talked about the Liberal commitment to a more reliable and cleaner electricity system. Well, earlier today, I referenced the fact that the ice storm of 2013 resulted in an extended power outage by a means that this government was well aware was a risk to the system. They didn't make sure the system was reinforced and could deal with that kind of extreme weather—how we lost power in the west end of Toronto in the summer of 2013, again, because this government was not prepared for the extreme weather that climate change is going to bring. More recently, CityPlace here in downtown Toronto—four power outages in two weeks. It is no consolation to tell a whole bunch of people that they're paying premium dollar for their electricity when it can be interrupted on a large scale, unpredictably, because this government has not been doing what needs to be done to make sure our system is reliable.

This government talked about a cleaner electricity system, as I said earlier. That's why they will pay money to companies that burn garbage to sell power into the system. That is not cleaner, Speaker. That is always dirtier and, beyond that, paying garbage-burning incinerators money for power that Ontario doesn't need. We have a substantial surplus of power in this province. If you're going to deal with that surplus, you need to block the dirty generators, garbage burning being one of them. You need to deal with the renewal of non-utility generator contracts for gas-fired baseload power when we don't need that. We have a surplus. We have a climate crisis, something the government talks about, and yet in these areas won't take action.

They talk about how the act will authorize a rebate equivalent to the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax. Speaker, I know this is a tough quiz—it's Thursday afternoon, and people are a bit sleepy, but my guess is that most people will know who put that HST on in the first place. They're sitting on the other side of the aisle from me: the Liberal government. They put it on, they've done their damage, they've seen the political consequences and they're backpedalling.

1720

Frankly, Speaker, I haven't had a chance to read that act. I do intend to read it and see what loopholes there are. We've gone through this before. The Ontario Clean Energy Benefit gave a short-term rebate to power users in Ontario, got the Liberals through two elections, and then it disappeared. Why would we not think that we will see similar things in this particular act?

It's interesting to me. They say that the rebate will be available and "appear on invoices issued on or after January 1, 2017." The charge for cap-and-trade, which should be appearing on gas bills, won't. It will be buried. This particular measure will be highlighted. I wouldn't be surprised if there's a smiley face of the Premier on the bills, saying, "Brought to you by the Premier of Ontario, Liberal Inc. Be grateful and thankful, oh you peasants, because I have acted in a beneficent way to you today." We will see something like that.

That raises the question of the Ontario Energy Board protecting us from rising prices. The Ontario Energy Board could be a powerful regulator. Increasingly, it has just become a glove puppet for this government. The burial of cap-and-trade costs in gas bills—Speaker, I want to tell you right now: There wasn't a whole bunch of intervenors at that hearing, saying, "Hey, you've got to bury this." There weren't. There was just the regulator—and this is just a guess, because I haven't seen any e-mails, letters or leaked documents—listening to their master's voice and saying, "Hmm, this could be bad for reappointments at some point. Let's do what they want."

This is a regulator that consistently has had its power, its influence and its ability to protect consumers undermined. Did they review the privatization of Hydro One, a matter that bore on and bears on the cost of power in this province? No. Did they have the power to do it? Yes, but they did not act. They did not act. Again, simply a little hand puppet for the Premier—when they need

something done or they need something said, the OEB gets to do it.

Did they review the plan for the installation of smart meters in Ontario? No. They were given marching orders—"Figure out how to make this happen"—and they did it. In Germany, people figured out that the smart meters weren't a good business deal and were a misallocation of investment. If you put \$2 billion into conservation and efficiency, you would save an awful lot, \$2 billion into smart meters: negligible impact on our power system. Did the OEB act to protect us? No, it did not. Again, simply a plaything of this government.

Most recently, earlier this year, there was a change to electricity laws that meant that when it comes to assessing new transmission lines, the Ontario Energy Board is set aside. Cabinet will decide if something is important. Cabinet will decide if they want a line to go through, and the OEB's power to challenge that is reduced to zero.

When powerful interests want a power line built and they have the ear of cabinet and they can say, "We are going to make life a little better for you," they can get a transmission line built. The ability of the public to challenge that, to actually take them on and to demand evidence be produced and that witnesses be questioned is set aside.

If you are privatizing Hydro One, you are opening up a Pandora's box of risk and threat to the economy and the families of Ontario. This government talks about this rebate and brought forward a law on the rebate, but won't address a key and an essential element of what has driven up and will continue to drive up rates in Ontario, and that's privatization.

I look at the minister's comments from earlier today about why they're acting and what their record is, and he talks about leaving coal behind. Leaving coal behind is a good thing. But you know what's interesting, Speaker? David Herle, who does a lot of polling for the Liberals, made a really good presentation to I think it was the Canadian Nuclear Association, sometime in the last 12, 16 months, talking about people's resistance to changes in pricing. He's an astute guy. He's a very capable, smart guy. It's well worth following his polling. He wisely said that if you said that the increase in price was for something like phasing out coal, it was more acceptable to people. If you said that the increase in price was to make somebody an awful lot richer—to increase the chances that the Liberals would hold onto a seat here or there, because they had to make a decision—that wouldn't fly.

So it's been interesting to watch the Liberal message track on this, because they've understood that as long as they say, "We're trying to make the world a healthier, cleaner place," they can use green energy as a shield against the tax.

I have to say, my Conservative colleagues over here don't like green energy and have attacked green energy heavily. So green energy gets battered between the Conservatives and the Liberals, with Tories beating it up—

Mrs. Gila Martow: We don't like subsidizing.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh, you don't like subsidizing power? Gee, what about gas plants? They're heavily subsidized in this province. What about nuclear power? Heavily subsidized in this province. Some 60% of the subsidy on your hydro bill goes to nuclear and gas. If you don't like subsidy, speak up. Speak up. I want to hear more of that.

It's green power that gets beat up. This government uses it as a shield, which has undermined its credibility. That is a dangerous thing, because, frankly, if we're going to take on climate change, if we're going to have clean air, if we're going to have a 21st-century economy, you have to plug into the rising industries of the century to come, and that is going to be green energy.

It's unfortunate that I only have these 20 minutes. I'm looking forward to debate on other bills. I'll have an opportunity to expand on some of these arguments.

Speaker, this speech from the throne is a profoundly modest document. I understand: The Liberals lost an election and they had to have some foofaraw to try and reset things, try and change the channel. I don't think they were successful. I think that's part of the reason that they're not even talking to this bill anymore. They're just not even talking to the speech from the throne.

Questions and comments? Yes, one or two minutes. But 20-minute, substantial discussion, substantial definition, defence, explanation? Nah, they've abandoned that, because it did its trick, right? We got through one news cycle. They made their announcement; we go on.

Speaker, the speech from the throne was very thin gruel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I commend the honourable member from Toronto–Danforth. He's been a long-time supporter of our closure of coal-fired generation.

He seems to discount the health effects or the green shield, as he put it. I have to say, both as a physician and as an individual who has seen many other cities and jurisdictions across this world who do not respect the environment and clean air and clean water, I can tell you that this is a very substantial and important move.

When we say that the closure of coal-fired generation in Ontario saves the government in the order of \$4 billion to \$6 billion in direct health care costs, we mean it. I can probably, at a separate time and venue, enumerate the huge number of lung diseases that affects directly.

I'd also like to commend and welcome our new member from Scarborough–Rouge River. I believe he was, in a more naive day, as he mentioned, an NDPer, and now he's a Conservative. I know there are at least a few Conservatives over there who believe in the system of evolution, so we would welcome you, sir, in the future. Perhaps you might join us, coming down the path.

There are probably at least six to eight points with reference to Ontario's throne speech, A Balanced Plan to Build Ontario Up—whether we're looking at the \$130, now-permanent 8% savings on our hydro bills kicking in,

as you know, on January 1, 2017, upgradable to almost 20% of the bill in a rural setting, perhaps touching \$540; and, for larger industrial users, up to 34%, again depending on what different programs they plug into.

As has been rightly mentioned, we get the message. We've understood some of the difficulties and challenges that our citizenry, our clients are having across the province of Ontario. These are moves—genuine moves, I think—to attempt to address those concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think what it comes down to—here we are at the end of a long day of debate, after many days of debate on the throne speech, and what it's coming down to is, who has the pulse of how disillusioned the voters and taxpayers in Ontario are? I think that it was a clear message in Scarborough. I think we can all agree that Scarborough–Rouge River showed just how disillusioned people are. They feel that they're paying their taxes, they're doing everything right, they're trying to save for their children's future and for their retirement, and they feel that the government is not doing the same.

1730

We're hearing about coal plants. Well, it was the PCs who closed the first coal plant in the province. It was the PC Party that developed the blue box. It's no big surprise that it's the nice PC blue colour. People are upset when they realize that—

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: You could have done it before us, but you didn't. The vast majority of green energy investors in the green energy investments in this province are Liberal donors. And the truth is getting out. People are understanding why hospitals aren't getting built, why subways aren't getting built, why things aren't getting built, and yet Hydro One has to be sold.

We heard from the member opposite just now that they believe—they haven't shown us any data but the Liberal government believes that somehow we're saving \$4 billion a year in health care costs. Well, then you should have \$4 billion. We shouldn't have a crisis in health care. That money should be going right into health care. Where is that money, Mr. Speaker? I would certainly like to know.

The 8% savings of HST are going to be very visible January 1, yet the new carbon tax will be hidden. People are angry, people are disillusioned, and we're going to see what's coming up in the next by-elections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for more questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It was a privilege to listen to the member from Toronto–Danforth because his heart and his passion are in energy and in the environment. To his credit, he comes with a lot of knowledge about this file. As mentioned, when the cap-and-trade tax was going to be put on hydro bills, apparently it was such an onerous task to show that charge, and it's going to be hidden in your invoices. Nobody will know how much

they're charged. People are upset about that. People want to know what they're paying for. Most people, if they know what they're paying for and what it's going to yield—that's another issue. Where is that tax revenue going to be spent? The government hasn't dedicated that to the environment. It hasn't dedicated that to climate change. That hasn't been dedicated. It's an open fund. It's an open account where you can use those funds for different things. So that's very problematic.

But yet this feel-good marketing—they must have done some research around this, because then you're going to have on your invoice—they're going to show what the rebate is, and that's going to make you have positive feelings towards this Wynne government. "Wow, we're getting \$130 back," but now we've forgotten how much we're being charged for the carbon cap-and-trade. There must have been some research, maybe some marketing doing that, but people are not fooled. They remember. They're going to remember and they're going to hold the Wynne government accountable for their decisions and their policy bumbles.

The member from Danforth talked about the smart meters—another bad decision. Forge ahead without properly putting the testing out there, making sure it works. Just when are these mistakes going to stop? People want to know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to stand up in this House and make a comment on the remarks made by the member from Toronto–Danforth. I have great respect for the member and in particular his passion for the environment, though I don't agree with their views—the NDP's views, actually—with regard to energy policy.

The NDP, as you know, Mr. Speaker, are against nuclear energy. They're against wind energy, solar energy and biomass energy, and we already heard that the member is not agreeable on burning garbage to produce electricity, so they want us to dump garbage and then create more, bigger dumps. That is their policy. It's rather difficult to understand where the NDP stands on energy issues in this province of Ontario.

When you go back to the early 1990s, I remember vividly that when the NDP was in power and our nuclear power plants were examined, they were rundown. As a result of those five years of the NDP in office in Ontario, followed by eight years of Conservatives in office in Ontario, we ended up with an energy infrastructure which was crumbling.

In the past 13 years, we've invested \$13 billion in order to rebuild our energy infrastructure. We have built more than 5,000 kilometres of power lines across the province of Ontario. We have built a tunnel under the city of Niagara Falls where we basically doubled the capacity of the Adam Beck power stations, where more than 500,000 people can have access to power.

In terms of listening to the public, we have listened to the public, and that's why we have taken the 8% provincial portion of the HST off the energy bills. This is going to be permanent, as the Premier mentioned. This is

actually going to save about \$130 for every homeowner, and about \$540 per year to people in northern Ontario.

These are the things this government has done. This is in the speech from the throne. I'm very supportive that our government is doing all the best we can in order to help the public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. I can now return to the member for Toronto–Danforth for his reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Etobicoke North, Thornhill and London–Fanshawe, and the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, for their comments.

Just with regard to the member from Etobicoke North, I actually think closing coal makes a lot of sense. I was a city councillor in the 1990s and fought against coal then. I was the head of Greenpeace for a number of years and fought against coal burning then. But I have to say to the member that the Liberals have used the closing of coal plants as a shield for a whole bunch of very noxious initiatives and said, "Prices are rising because we closed coal plants, because we have green power." Well, no. That was a small part of the issue. There are much bigger problems around privatization, much bigger problems around overbuilding and much bigger problems, frankly, about a number of initiatives that had no real use for the system as a whole, but may well have reflected the interests of the Liberals. I would say that throwing green energy out there as your defence for having high and rising prices does a disservice to green energy and confuses the population.

To the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, I apologize if I haven't been clear at other times. Generally we agree on many things, but when you're burning garbage instead of recycling, if you don't have a circular economy, you're wasting energy—and, frankly, it's toxic. I got my experience fighting toxic waste incinerators in the east end of Toronto. I had a lot of opportunity to get soaked in the science of it. You cannot run those things on a clean basis, and you can't run them on an energy-efficient basis.

We support green energy. We think it needs to be publicly owned. We think it needs to be publicly developed. That's the future. If I've ever been unclear, I've made it clear now.

Speaker, time is short. This speech from the throne reflects a tired government running out of ideas. There's not a lot there to talk about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I think that, for the interests of people who are watching this debate this afternoon, I should explain something. For those of you who have been watching the debate since we began at approximately 1:30, you will have noticed that there were no Liberal members standing up to participate in the throne speech debate.

What makes a throne speech debate unique—and the Speaker referenced this a bit today during question period—is that during throne speech debates you can talk

about anything, as long as it relates to your riding. The throne speech allows you to participate and give feedback on your community, so in some ways you have a perfect opportunity.

We have all been working back in our ridings since June. This is our first week back formally for the Legislature to debate. Monday, of course, was the throne speech, which is supposed to be the government's agenda moving forward for the next legislative session, and what we see is no Liberals defending the throne speech. No Liberals actually talking about what they've been hearing back in their ridings and back in their communities.

1740

It fascinates me to no end that the one opportunity—every member of the Liberal caucus can raise whatever issue they want during this debate and they have instead chosen to remain silent. I think it speaks volumes. I think it speaks volumes to the fact that they're not really very excited about the throne speech. Based on what we've been seeing in the newspaper since Monday and the reaction from the public, it's not surprising that you're not excited about what was in the throne speech because, to my colleague's point, it's pretty thin gruel.

You have an opportunity in a throne speech debate to bring forward ideas, bring forward suggestions, talk about what you've been hearing and, instead, it's crickets from the Liberal benches. I just wanted to explain that to the viewers who are thinking, "Why is it only NDP and Progressive Conservative members who are standing up and participating in the speech from the throne debates?" That's why. They have chosen to sit on their hands.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to today's debate. Last week, the Premier announced she would be proroguing the Legislature in an attempt to hit reset on her mandate and announce changes to help Ontarians across the province with the affordability of energy. It was her press conference, it was her statements that said our next legislative agenda is going to focus on pocketbook issues. It's going to be about energy.

Speaker, it didn't fool anyone. This was only after a third consecutive by-election loss that the Premier finally realized changes needed to be made. But it's too little; it's too late. Ontarians are fed up paying exorbitant prices for hydro. In the last eight years, the price of hydro during off-peak hours has nearly tripled, whereas mid-peak and on-peak rates have nearly doubled. Clearly, hydro rates in our province are growing uncontrollably.

For years, my Progressive Conservative colleagues and I have repeatedly told this government that their reckless mismanagement of the province's energy sector has resulted in exorbitant hydro rates that Ontarians and businesses are unable to afford. The cost of hydro continues to be the number one issue I hear from residents and businesses in Dufferin-Caledon. I want to take a moment to go through a list of concerns that I received this summer from residents and businesses in Dufferin-Caledon.

One constituent called my office explaining they were behind in their hydro bills for their small business and

home. They were in arrears and owed a total of \$42,000. Do you really think 37 cents a day is going to make a difference to these people? Not a chance. Another constituent contacted my office about receiving a \$7,000 hydro bill after not receiving a single bill for five months. Again, 37 cents isn't going to do anything for them. Another individual called my office about how hydro is outrageous. They have done all the energy-efficient things possible, yet their bill is still over \$200 a month for a single person living in a small home. An individual informed me he's been playing catch-up with his bill that is in arrears and Hydro One keeps threatening to cut him off.

A small business owner called about their difficulty in paying their hydro bill. They will start falling behind and will have to close their doors if they don't receive relief soon. Business owners are facing the difficult choice of trying to run their business and pay exorbitant hydro rates or move to a neighbouring jurisdiction, while homeowners are being forced to choose between buying food or paying their hydro.

This government's mistakes and inaction to curb our energy prices have driven Ontarians and businesses into energy poverty. We weren't even using the words "energy poverty" five years ago. Now it's common.

To put this into perspective, there are 567,000 Ontario electricity customers in arrears in 2015, owing over \$172.5 million dollars. That's nearly 100,000 more than there were in 2013. How much more proof do you need to see that Ontarians and businesses are suffering because of this government's failed policies? Unfortunately, while the government ignores our concerns, the pleas from Ontarians and businesses continue. But, as I said earlier, it was only after another decisive by-election loss that the government finally realized hydro is their problem. Now their idea to help lower hydro bills is to remove the provincial portion of the HST from hydro bills, which will save approximately—they're saying—the average family \$150 a year or, as I like to say, 37 cents a day.

While short-term relief for Ontario families is desperately needed, this announcement will do nothing to stop hydro bills from increasing. The fact of the matter is we already know that there will be another increase on November 1. So what actual difference will the government's proposals do for the families and businesses in Dufferin-Caledon, when rates will continue to rise and are set to increase by another 42%? This government's proposal is merely a band-aid solution.

The government's cap-and-trade scheme will also cost Ontarians approximately \$156 a year. So any savings from removing the HST are immediately wiped away with the government's cap-and-trade. If the government truly was serious about tackling the province's energy crisis, they would immediately halt the sale of Hydro One and stop signing contracts for energy we aren't using.

Over 80% of Ontarians and nearly 200 municipalities agree that the government's Hydro One fire sale is a bad

deal for Ontarians. It's time for the government to get serious and stop providing band-aid solutions. Ontarians and businesses want to see a real plan to make energy affordable, so our province can afford to attract businesses, not deter them, and so families don't have to make the difficult choice of buying food or heating or cooling their home.

As I said before, the government's throne speech was not the reset they hoped it would be. It failed to provide real solutions to get Ontario back on track. One issue I would have loved to see this government provide a plan for in the throne speech would have been to tackle the province's growing debt. This summer, Ontario's debt reached \$300 billion for the first time ever in our province's history. Additionally, the Financial Accountability Officer stated that the province's net debt is set to increase by more than \$50 billion by 2021 for a record \$350 billion. Just in the past six years alone, Ontario's net debt doubled due to this government's financial management.

What's more concerning is that interest on the debt is currently the third-highest expenditure in the province. If servicing the debt were a ministry, it would have the third-largest budget behind only the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. Just imagine the services we can provide if we didn't have to keep funnelling money to pay the interest on the debt. They seem content letting the debt grow and grow on the backs of Ontarians. Given the fact that interest rates are at a record low, the Financial Accountability Officer noted that with each one point—a single point increase in interest rates—interest payments will rise by \$350 million. I cannot stress enough the need for a plan before our debt reaches its breaking point.

Speaker, the government continues to boast that they are on track to balance the budget in one year, by 2017-18. But the fact of the matter is that given the government's plan to remove the HST from hydro bills and their pledge to create 100,000 child care spaces over the next five years, this will cost as much as \$4 billion. It raises serious questions about the government's ability to balance the budget in 2017-18. The Financial Accountability Officer predicts the government will run deficits from 2018-19 to 2020-21, which will result in our province's net debt to continue to rise. Instead of this government's theatrics with their pretend reset, how about they come up with a real plan to bring Ontario back on track? It shouldn't take a by-election loss to make the government understand they have to make a change.

I have a few minutes left, and I'd like to talk about the child care promise. One of the things that I've been dealing with over the summer is a small business, an independent business, that wants to set up a child care operation. They have been working with the ministry for over 18 months. They still don't have their approval. There has never been a point in their process where the ministry has said, "You've done something wrong." It is simply delays. They renovate the building, and then they wait and wait and wait until someone from the ministry is

willing to come and say, "Yes, it looks good. Check." The fact that we have a small business in Ontario that is having that much trouble opening—and remember, it's your child care spaces. People are waiting for these opportunities. Parents want these spaces. I'm going to repeat it again: They have never had a "You did something wrong," and yet, 18 months later, they are still waiting to operate a small business in Ontario.

1750

I think if you wanted to focus on encouraging people to open up child care spaces and making sure that there are opportunities for people, you should start looking at your ministries and saying, "How can we do this better? How can we be more reactionary and more focused on the client base? How can we help that small business open instead of figuring out ways to delay them and ensure that eventually she is going to get so frustrated and say, 'Forget it. It's not worth the effort. I will go to another jurisdiction.'" Is that really the Ontario we are aspiring to? Is this the stretch goal we want: that somehow we're going to assume that if you are opening up a business in Ontario, you must be doing something wrong? I think that's a terrible indictment of what we should be doing as government, what we should be doing as legislators and, quite frankly, what the public wants. They see, they read that there is a dearth of child care spaces in Ontario. This is a young person who sees an opportunity and is prepping for it and is only getting delayed and ignored. I think it's a really unfortunate but obvious example of some of the things that we forget to concentrate on. Instead, we talk about 37 cents a day, which is going to mean nothing.

I'm just going to end with this: Ontarians are fed up with 13 years of mistakes and inaction by this government. I think that Monday was another missed opportunity, where you could have done a much better job of saying, "We're taking a new track, we're going in a new direction, and this is what we're doing." Then, all of your backbenchers and all of your caucus members could have proudly stood up and said, "These are the things that my community wanted and it was in the throne speech."

I don't want to put words in anybody's mouth, Speaker, but I'm going to suggest to you that one of the reasons the Liberal members are not standing up and participating in this debate is there's nothing in that throne speech for them to talk about.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: In the spirit of the remarks from the member from Dufferin-Caledon, I'm going to talk for a—I might only have a couple of minutes to talk, so I'm going to talk about something in my riding that pertains to the throne speech. It's the headline in the Temiskaming Speaker. This might not be the Globe and Mail, but in my riding this is a very important newspaper. Wednesday, September 7: The headline is "Increasing the Need. Food Bank Use Rising with Electricity and Gasoline Costs." Salvation Army Lieutenant Anne

Holden said, "There is a definite increase from week to week in the number of people seeking food assistance in New Liskeard. Some are singles, some are families, but many are seniors." They usually tell her, "I thought I would never need this service. It's very humbling." That is why this keeps coming up, and that has been going on for a long time.

A few days later, I got a call from Mike, who owns Earlton Grocery King. Mike is in trouble. He's telling everybody he's in trouble. One of the reasons he's in trouble: People can't afford to buy the same amount of food they were buying before. Another reason he's in trouble—he bought Earlton Grocery King seven years ago and his hydro bill was \$3,400 a month. It's now \$7,000 a month. Could he plan for that?

Some of the members probably remember Earlton. That was where the plowing match was in 2009. Remember? That's where you got off the train. Do you know something else? The train is no longer there. You cut it. And the buses are being cut, so there's not even public transportation.

You're talking about building Ontario up for everyone. That's why it's such a joke for many people in northern and rural Ontario, because they don't see it. It's just talking points, and people can't live with talking points.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I'm delighted to stand up and speak and rebut the deputy leader and the member for Dufferin—Caledon, whom I happen to like very much.

I did have to say that I think the member opposite is confusing quality and quantity because the assumption implicit in her argument is that somehow speaking for 20 minutes is always better than speaking for two minutes. But I think that she would agree that saying the same things ad nauseam, over and over again, stretching it over 20 minutes, doesn't really add to the value of debate or the quality of life of Ontarians. So the basic premise of your argument: I have to disagree with it. I think it was based on a false premise. On this side of the House, we are able to say in two minutes what might take 20 minutes for some other people.

The key issue is that we are just as committed and passionate about all of the things that take place in our ridings as all of you are. I do not for a minute question your commitment or passion for your constituents, and I would hope that you would give us the same benefit of the doubt: that we're just as passionate and committed to our constituents.

I would like to take the next 40 seconds to speak about the throne speech and its impact on my riding, the great riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, which I have to say that the member for Caledon has actually visited. It was joyful. It was really, really nice to welcome her at that event, which was, if I remember correctly, something

to do with the heart. It was defibrillators—I don't know if I said that correctly, but I think that was the one. It is events like that in the community that really we, as MPPs—that's our primary job: to be there for the community and do those kinds of things that are so critical. So I just want to say that my constituents are thrilled with the throne speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that I'm going to be the last one speaking on this today. I just want to mention that I've been listening to all of the comments all day today and I wanted to mention a few that I've heard this week.

One is that the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said that one out of every five rural homes and businesses and one out of every 10 urban in Ontario is unable to fully pay their hydro rates and is in arrears.

The member from Sarnia—Lambton told me that 3,558 homes in his riding are unable to pay their hydro rates, out of 526,000 in Ontario.

Cap-and-trade is coming, which is going to add to the burden. Food prices are going to go up; another four cents a litre on gas, and we know that's going to hurt rural families and businesses more because they have longer drives and commutes, a longer transport for food and other essentials, and they can't rely on any kind of transit system to help them get around.

We've heard from this government that people need to have secure retirement incomes. Well, Madam Speaker, how are they going to pay for increased hydro rates when they have a limited retirement income? Whatever extra money they get from an expanded CPP in Ontario is going to go to just paying their hydro rates, so they're going to be no better off after all that hard work and money wasted.

We heard from the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science that energy is just a commodity, as though there's an open market, as though you can buy energy from different companies or different suppliers. Unfortunately, the government controls energy in this province, and they've seen that the price is raised.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

I'm going to return to the member from Dufferin—Caledon to wrap up.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It was a pleasure, as always, to participate in the throne speech debate. I hope the members opposite get the opportunity to do that someday.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.
Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, September 21, 2016, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
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DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Ottawa–Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Lou Rinaldi
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Cristina Martins
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch